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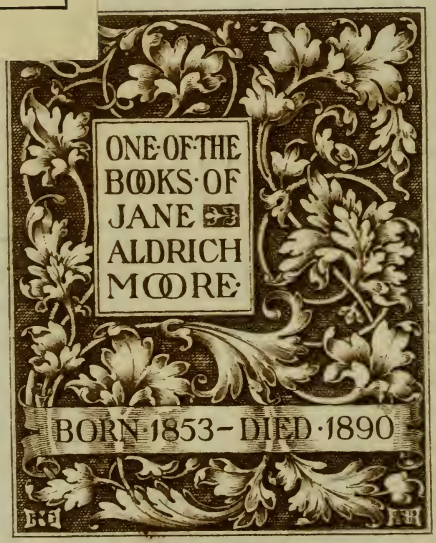

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VENETIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"VIVIAN GREY" AND "HENRIETTA TEMPLE."

"Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child?"

"The child of love, though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in convulsion."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO LORD LYNDHURST.

In happier hours, when I first mentioned to you the idea of this Work, it was my intention, while inscribing it with your name, to have entered into some details as to the principles which had guided me in its composition, and the feelings with which I had attempted to shadow forth, though as "in a glass darkly," two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our latter days. But now, I will only express a hope that the time may come when in these pages you may find some relaxation from the cares, and some distraction from the sorrows, of existence, and that you will then receive this dedication as a record of my respect and my affection.

May, 1837.

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VENETIA.

CHAPTER I.

Some ten years before the revolt of our American colonies, there was situate in one of our midland counties, on the borders of an extensive forest, an ancient hall that belonged to the Herberts, but which, though ever well preserved, had not until that period been visited by any member of the family, since the exile of the Stuarts. It was an edifice of considerable size, built of grey stone, much covered with ivy, and placed upon the last gentle elevation of a long ridge of hills, in the centre of a crescent of woods, that far overtopped its clusters of tall chimneys and turreted gables.

Although the principal chambers were on the first story, you could nevertheless step forth from their windows on a very broad terrace, whence you descended into the gardens by a double flight of broad stone steps, exactly in the middle of its length. These gardens were of some extent, and filled with evergreen shrubberies of remarkable overgrowth, while occasionally turfy vistas, cut in the distant woods, came sloping down to the south, as if they opened to receive the sunbeam that greeted the genial aspect of the mansion. The ground-floor was principally occupied by the hall itself, which of course was of great dimensions, hung round with many a family portrait and rural picture, furnished with long oaken seats covered with scarlet cushions, and ornamented with a parti-coloured floor of alternate diamonds of black and white marble. From the centre of the roof of the mansion, which was always covered with pigeons, rose the clock-tower of the chapel, surmounted by a vane; and, before

the mansion itself, was a large plot of grass, with a fountain in its middle, surrounded by a hedge of honeysuckle.

This plot of grass was separated from an extensive park, that opened in front of the hall, by very tall iron gates, on each of the pillars of which was a lion rampant supporting the escutcheon of the family. The deer wandered in this enclosed and well-wooded demesne, and about a mile from the mansion, in a direct line with the iron gates, was an old-fashioned lodge, which marked the limit of the park, and from which you emerged into a very fine avenue of limes bounded on both sides by fields. At the termination of this avenue was a strong but simple gate, and a woodman's cottage; and then spread before you a vast landscape of open, wild lands, which seemed on one side interminable, while on the other the eye rested on the dark heights of the neighbouring forest.

This picturesque, and very secluded abode, was the residence of Lady Annabel Herbert

and her daughter, the young and beautiful Venetia, a child, at the time when our history commences, of very tender age. It was nearly seven years, since Lady Annabel and her infant daughter had sought the retired shades of Cherbury, which they had never since quitted. They lived alone and for each other; the mother educated her child, and the child interested her mother by her affectionate disposition, the development of a mind of no ordinary promise, and a sort of captivating grace and charming playfulness of temper, which were extremely delightful. Lady Annabel was still young and very lovely. That she was wealthy her establishment clearly denoted, and she was a daughter of one of the haughtiest houses in the kingdom. It was strange then that with all the brilliant accidents of birth, and beauty, and fortune, she should still, as it were in the morning of her life, have withdrawn to this secluded mansion, in a county where she was personally unknown, distant from the metropolis, estranged from all

her own relatives and connexions, and without the resource of even a single neighbour, for the only place of importance in her vicinity was uninhabited. The general impression of the villagers was that Lady Annabel was a widow; and yet there were some speculators who would shrewdly remark, that her ladyship had never worn weeds, although, if Venetia were her only child, her husband could not have been long dead when she first arrived at Cherbury. On the whole, however, these good people were not very inquisitive, and it was fortunate for them; for there was little chance and slight means of gratifying their curiosity. The whole of the establishment had been formed at Cherbury, with the exception of her ladyship's waiting-woman, Mistress Pauncefort, and she was by far too great a personage to condescend to reply to any question which was not made to her by Lady Annabel herself.

The beauty of the young Venetia was not the hereditary gift of her beautiful mother. It

was not from Lady Annabel that Venetia Herbert had derived those seraphic locks that fell over her shoulders and down her neck in golden streams, nor that clear grey eye, even whose childish glance might perplex the gaze of manhood, nor that little aquiline nose, that gave a haughty expression to a countenance that had never yet dreamed of pride, nor that radiant complexion, that dazzled with its brilliancy, like some winged minister of Raffael or Murillo. The peasants that passed the lady and her daughter in their walks, and who blessed her as they passed, for all her grace and goodness, often marvelled why so fair a mother and so fair a child should be so dissimilar, that one indeed might be compared to a starry night, and the other to a sunny day.

CHAPTER II.

It was a bright and soft spring morning: the dewy vistas of Cherbury sparkled in the sun, the cooing of the pigeons sounded around, the peacocks strutted about the terrace and spread their tails with infinite enjoyment and conscious pride, and Lady Annabel came forth with her little daughter, to breathe the renovating odours of the season. The air was scented with the violet, tufts of daffodils were scattered all about, and, though the snowdrop had vanished, and the primroses were fast disappearing, their wild and shaggy leaves still looked picturesque and glad.

"Mamma," said the little Venetia, "is this spring?"

"This is spring, my child," replied Lady Annabel, "beautiful spring! The year is young and happy, like my little girl."

"If Venetia be like the spring, mamma is like the summer!" replied the child; and the mother smiled. "And is not the summer young and happy?" resumed Venetia.

"It is not quite as young as the spring," said Lady Annabel, looking down with fondness on her little companion, "and, I fear, not quite as happy."

"But it is as beautiful," said Venetia.

"It is not beauty that makes us happy," said Lady Annabel; "to be happy, my love, we must be good."

"Am I good?" said Venetia.

"Very good," said Lady Annabel.

"I am very happy," said Venetia; "I wonder whether, if I be always good, I shall always be happy."

"You cannot be happy without being good, my love; but happiness depends upon the will

of God If you be good he will guard over you."

"What can make me unhappy, mamma?" inquired Venetia.

"An evil conscience, my love."

"Conscience!" said Venetia; "what is conscience?"

"You are not yet quite old enough to understand," said Lady Annabel, "but some day I will teach you. Mamma is now going to take a long walk, and Venetia shall walk with her."

So saying, the Lady Annabel summoned Mistress Pauncefort, a gentlewoman of not more discreet years than might have been expected in the attendant of so young a mistress; but one well-qualified for her office, very zealous and devoted, somewhat consequential, full of energy and decision, capable of directing, fond of giving advice, and habituated to command. The Lady Annabel, leading her daughter, and accompanied by her faithful blood-hound, Marmion, ascended one of those sloping vistas that we have noticed,

Mistress Pauncefort following them about a pace behind, and after her a groom, at a very respectful distance, leading Miss Herbert's donkey.

They soon entered a winding path through the wood, which was the background of their dwelling. Lady Annabel was silent, and lost in her reflections; Venetia plucked the beautiful wild hyacinths that then abounded in the wood, in such profusion that their beds spread like patches of blue enamel, and gave them to Mistress Pauncefort, who, as the collection increased, handed them over to the groom; who, in turn, deposited them in the wicker seat prepared for his young mistress. The bright sun bursting through the tender foliage of the year, the clear and genial air, the singing of the birds, and the wild and joyous exclamations of Venetia, as she gathered her flowers, made it a cheerful party, notwithstanding the silence of its mistress.

When they emerged from the wood, they found themselves on the brow of the hill, a small down over which Venetia ran, exulting in the healthy breeze which, at this exposed

height, was strong and fresh. As they advanced to the opposite declivity to that which they had ascended, a wide and peculiar landscape opened before them. The extreme distance was formed by an undulating ridge of lofty and savage hills; nearer than these were gentler elevations, partially wooded; and at their base was a rich valley, its green meads fed by a clear and rapid stream, which glittered in the sun as it coursed on, losing itself at length in a wild and sedgy lake that formed the furthest limit of a widely spreading park. In the centre of this park, and not very remote from the banks of the rivulet, was an ancient gothic building, that had once been an abbey of great repute and wealth, and had not much suffered in its external character, by having served for nearly two centuries and a half as the principal dwelling of an old baronial family.

Descending the downy hill, that here and there was studded with fine old trees, enriching by their presence the view from the abbey, Lady Annabel and her party entered the meads, and,

skirting the lake, approached the venerable walls without crossing the stream.

It was difficult to conceive a scene more silent and more desolate. There was no sign of life, and not a sound save the occasional cawing of a rook. Advancing towards the abbey, they passed a pile of buildings that, in the summer, might be screened from sight by the foliage of a group of elms, too scanty at present to veil their desolation. Wide gaps in the roof proved that the vast and dreary stables were no longer used; there were empty granaries, whose doors had fallen from their hinges; the gate of the court-yard was prostrate on the ground; and the silent clock that once adorned the cupola over the noble entrance arch, had long lost its index. Even the litter of the yard appeared dusty and grey with age. You felt sure no human foot could have disturbed it for years. At the back of these buildings were nailed the trophies of the game-keeper: hundreds of wild cats, dried to blackness, stretched their down-

ward heads and legs from the mouldering wall; hawks, magpies, and jays hung in tattered remnants; but all grey, and even green, with age; and the heads of birds in plenteous rows, nailed beak upward, and so dried and shrivelled by the suns and winds and frosts of many seasons, that their distinctive characters were lost.

"Do you know, my good Pauncefort," said Lady Annabel, "that I have an odd fancy to-day to force an entrance into the old abbey. It is strange, fond as I am of this walk, that we have never yet entered it. Do you recollect our last vain efforts? Shall we be more fortunate this time, think you?"

Mistress Pauncefort smiled and smirked, and, advancing to the old gloomy porch, gave a very determined ring at the bell. Its sound might be heard echoing through the old cloisters, but a considerable time elapsed without any other effect being produced. Perhaps Lady Annabel would have now given up the attempt, but the little Venetia expressed so much regret at the

disappointment, that her mother directed the groom to reconnoitre in the neighbourhood, and see if it were possible to discover any person connected with the mansion.

"I doubt our luck, my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort, "for they do say that the abbey is quite uninhabited."

"'T is a pity," said Lady Annabel, "for, with all its desolation, there is something about this spot which ever greatly interests me."

"Mamma, why does no one live here?" said Venetia.

"The master of the abbey lives abroad, my child."

"Why does he, mamma?"

"Never ask questions, Miss Venetia," said Mistress Pauncefort, in a hushed and solemn tone; "it is not pretty." Lady Annabel had moved away.

The groom returned, and said he had met a very old man, picking water-cresses, and he was the only person who lived in the abbey, except

his wife, and she was bed-ridden. The old man had promised to admit them when he had completed his task, but not before, and the groom feared it would be some time before he arrived.

"Come, Pauncefort, rest yourself on this bench," said Lady Annabel, seating herself in the porch; "and Venetia, my child, come hither to me."

"Mamma," said Venetia, "what is the name of the gentleman to whom this abbey belongs?"

"Lord Cadurcis, love."

"I should like to know why Lord Cadurcis lives abroad?" said Venetia, musingly.

"There are many reasons why persons may choose to quit their native country, and dwell in another, my love," said Lady Annabel, very quietly; "some change the climate for their health."

"Did Lord Cadurcis, mamma?" asked Venetia.

"I do not know Lord Cadurcis, dear, or any thing of him, except that he is a very old man, and has no family."

At this moment there was a sound of bars and bolts withdrawn, and the falling of a chain, and at length the massy door slowly opened, and the old man appeared and beckoned to them to enter.

"'T is eight years, come Martinmas, since I opened this door," said the old man, "and it sticks a bit. You must walk about by yourselves, for I have no breath, and my mistress is bed-ridden. There, straight down the cloister, you can't miss your way; there is not much to see."

The interior of the abbey formed a quadrangle, surrounded by the cloisters, and in this inner court was a very curious fountain, carved with exquisite skill by some gothic artist in one of those capricious moods of sportive invention, that produced those grotesque medleys for which the feudal sculptor was celebrated. Not a sound was heard except the fall of the fountain and the light echoes that its voice called up.

The staircase led Lady Annabel and her party through several small rooms, scantily garnished with very ancient furniture, in some of

which were portraits of the family, until they at length entered a noble saloon, once the refectory of the abbey, and not deficient in splendour, though sadly soiled and worm-eaten. It was hung with tapestry representing the Cartoons of Raffael, and their still vivid colours contrasted with the faded hangings and the dingy damask of the chairs and sofas. A mass of Cromwellian armour was huddled together in a corner of a long monkish gallery, with a standard, encrusted with dust, and a couple of old drums, one broken. From one of the windows they had a good view of the old walled garden, which did not tempt them to enter it; it was a wilderness, the walks no longer distinguishable from the rank vegetation of the once cultivated lawns; the terraces choked up with the unchecked shrubberies; and here and there a leaden statue, a goddess or a satyr, prostrate, and covered with moss and lichen.

"It makes me melancholy," said Lady Annabel; "let us return."

"Mamma," said Venetia, "are there any ghosts in this abbey?"

"You may well ask me, love," replied Lady Annabel; "it seems a spell-bound place. But, Venetia, I have often told you there are no such things as ghosts."

"Is it naughty to believe in ghosts, mamma, for I cannot help believing in them?"

"When you are older, and have more knowledge, you will not believe in them, Venetia," replied Lady Annabel.

Our friends left Cadurcis abbey. Venetia mounted her donkey, her mother walked by her side; the sun was beginning to decline when they again reached Cherbury, and the air was brisk. Lady Annabel was glad to find herself by her fireside in her little terrace-room, and Venetia, fetching her book, read to her mother until their dinner hour.

CHAPTER III.

Two serene and innocent years had glided away at Cherbury since this morning ramble to Cadurcis abbey, and Venetia had grown in loveliness, in goodness, and intelligence. Her lively and somewhat precocious mind had become greatly developed ; and, though she was only nine years of age, it scarcely needed the affection of a mother to find in her an interesting and engaging companion. Although feminine education was little regarded in those days, that of Lady Annabel had been an exception to the general practice of society. She had been brought up with the consciousness of other objects of female attainment and accomplishment than embroidery,

"the complete art of making pastry," and reading "The Whole Duty of Man." She had profited, when a child, by the guidance of her brother's tutor, who had bestowed no unfruitful pains upon no ordinary capacity. She was a good linguist, a fine musician, was well read in our elder poets and their Italian originals, was no unskilful artist, and had acquired some knowledge of botany when wandering, as a girl, in her native woods. Since her retirement to Cherbury, reading had been her chief resource. The hall contained a library whose shelves, indeed, were more full than choice; but amid folios of theological controversy and civil law, there might be found the first editions of most of the celebrated writers of the reign of Anne, which the contemporary proprietor of Cherbury, a man of wit and fashion in his day, had duly collected in his yearly visits to the metropolis, and finally deposited in the family book-room.

The education of her daughter was not only

the principal duty of Lady Annabel, but her chief delight. To cultivate the nascent intelligence of a child, in those days, was not the mere piece of scientific mechanism that the admirable labours of so many ingenious writers have since permitted it comparatively to become. In those days there was no Mrs. Barbauld, no Madame de Genlis, no Miss Edgeworth; no "Evenings At Home," no "Children's Friend," no "Parent's Assistant." Venetia loved her book; indeed, she was never happier than when reading; but she soon recoiled from the gilt and lilliputian volumes of the good Mr. Newbury, and her mind required some more substantial excitement than "Tom Thumb," or even "Goody Two-Shoes." "The Seven Champions" was a great resource and a great favourite; but it required all the vigilance of a mother to eradicate the false impressions which such studies were continually making on so tender a student; and to disenchant, by rational discussion, the fascinated imagination of her

child. Lady Annabel endeavoured to find some substitute in the essays of Addison and Steele; but they required more knowledge of the every-day world for their enjoyment than an infant, bred in such seclusion, could at present afford; and at last Venetia lost herself in the wildering pages of Clelia and the Arcadia, which she pored over with a rapt and ecstatic spirit, that would not comprehend the warning scepticism of her parent. Let us picture to ourselves the high-bred Lady Annabel in the terrace room of her ancient hall, working at her tapestry, and, seated at her feet, her little daughter Venetia, reading aloud the Arcadia! The peacocks have jumped up on the window sill, to look at their friends who love to feed them, and by their pecking have aroused the blood-hound, crouching at Lady Annabel's feet. And Venetia looks up from her folio with a flushed and smiling face to catch the sympathy of her mother, who rewards her daughter's study with a kiss. Ah! there are no such mothers and no such daughters now!

Thus it will be seen that the life and studies of Venetia tended rather dangerously, in spite of all the care of her mother, to the development of her imagination, in case indeed she possessed that terrible and fatal gift. She passed her days in unbroken solitude, or broken only by affections which softened her heart, and in a scene which itself might well promote any predisposition of the kind; beautiful and picturesque objects surrounded her on all sides; she wandered, as it were, in an enchanted wilderness, and watched the deer reposing under the green shadow of stately trees; the old hall itself was calculated to excite mysterious curiosity; one wing was uninhabited and shut up; each morning and evening she repaired with her mother and the household through long galleries to the chapel, where she knelt to her devotions, illumined by a window blazoned with the arms of that illustrious family of which she was a member, and of which she knew nothing. She had an indefinite and

painful consciousness that she had been early checked in the natural inquiries which occur to every child; she had insensibly been trained to speak only of what she saw; and, when she listened, at night, to the long ivy rustling about the windows, and the wild owls hooting about the mansion, with their pining, melancholy voices, she might have been excused for believing in those spirits, which her mother warned her to discredit; or she forgot these mournful impressions in dreams caught from her romantic volumes, of bright knights and beautiful damsels.

Only one event of importance had occurred at Cherbury, during these two years, if indeed that be not too strong a phrase to use in reference to an occurrence which occasioned so slight and passing an interest. Lord Cadurcis had died. He had left his considerable property to his natural children, but the abbey had descended with the title to a very distant relative. The circle at Cherbury had heard,

and that was all, that the new lord was a minor, a little boy, indeed very little older than Venetia herself; but this information produced no impression. The abbey was still deserted and desolate as ever.

CHAPTER IV.

Every Sunday afternoon, the rector of a neighbouring, though still somewhat distant parish, of which the rich living was in the gift of the Herberts, came to perform divine service at Cherbury. It was a subject of deep regret to Lady Annabel that herself and her family were debarred from the advantage of more frequent and convenient spiritual consolation; but, at this time, the parochial discipline of the Church of England was not so strict as it fortunately is at present. Cherbury, though a vicarage, possessed neither parish church, nor a residence for the clergyman; nor was there indeed a village. The peasants on the estate, or

labourers as they are now styled, a term whose introduction into our rural world is much to be lamented, lived in the respective farm-houses on the lands which they cultivated. These were scattered about at considerable distances, and many of their inmates found it more convenient to attend the church of the contiguous parish than to repair to the hall chapel, where the household and the dwellers in the few cottages scattered about the park and woods always assembled. The Lady Annabel, whose lot it had been in life to find her best consolation in religion, and who was influenced by not only a sincere, but even a severe piety, had no other alternative, therefore, but engaging a chaplain; but this, after much consideration, she had resolved not to do. She was indeed her own chaplain, herself performing each day such parts of our morning and evening service whose celebration becomes a laic, and reading portions from the writings of those eminent divines, who, from the Restoration to the conclusion of the last reign, have so

eminently distinguished the communion of our national Church.

Each Sunday, after the performance of divine service, the Rev. Dr. Masham dined with the family, and he was the only guest at Cherbury Venetia ever remembered seeing. The Doctor was a regular orthodox divine of the eighteenth century; with a large cauliflower wig, shovel-hat, and huge knee-buckles, barely covered by his top-boots; learned, jovial, humorous, and somewhat courtly; truly pious, but not enthusiastic; not forgetful of his tithes, but generous and charitable when they were once paid; never neglecting the sick, yet occasionally following a fox; a fine scholar, an active magistrate, and a good shot; dreading the pope, and hating the presbyterians.

The Doctor was attached to the Herbert family not merely because they had given him a good living. He had a great reverence for an old English race, and turned up his nose at the Walpolian loanmongers. Lady Annabel, too,

so beautiful, so dignified, so amiable and highly bred, and, above all, so pious, had won his regard. He was not a little proud, too, that he was the only person in the county who had the honour of her acquaintance, and yet was disinterested enough to regret that she led so secluded a life, and often lamented that nothing would induce her to show her elegant person on a race-course, or to attend an assize ball, an assembly which was then becoming much the fashion. The little Venetia was a charming child, and the kind-hearted Doctor, though a bachelor, loved children;

"O! matre pulchrâ, filia pulchrior,"

was the Rev. Dr. Masham's apposite and favourite quotation after his weekly visit to Cherbury.

Divine service was concluded; the Doctor had preached a capital sermon; for he had been one of the shining lights of his university until his rich but isolating preferment had apparently

closed the great career which it was once supposed awaited him. The accustomed walk on the terrace was completed, and dinner was announced. This meal was always celebrated at Cherbury, where new fashions stole down with a lingering pace, in the great hall itself. An ample table was placed in the centre on a mat of rushes, sheltered by a large screen covered with huge maps of the shire and the neighbouring counties. The Lady Annabel and her good pastor seated themselves at each end of the table, while Venetia, mounted on a high chair, was waited on by Mistress Pauncefort, who never condescended by any chance attention to notice the presence of any other individual but her little charge, on whose chair she just leaned with an air of condescending devotion. The butler stood behind his lady, and two other servants watched the Doctor; rural bodies all, but decked on this day in gorgeous livery coats of blue and silver, which had been made originally for men of very different size and

bearing. Simple as was the usual diet at Cherbury, the cook was permitted on Sunday full play to her art, which, in the eighteenth century, indulged in the production of dishes more numerous and substantial than our refined tastes could at present tolerate. The Doctor appreciated a good dinner, and his countenance glistened with approbation as he surveyed the ample tureen of potage royal, with a boned duck swimming in its centre. Before him still scowled in death the grim countenance of a huge roast pike, flanked on one side by a leg of mutton *à-la-daube*, and on the other by the tempting delicacies of bombarded veal. To these succeeded that masterpiece of the culinary art, a grand battalia pie, in which the bodies of chickens pigeons and rabbits were embalmed in spices, cocks' combs, and savory balls, and well bedewed with one of those rich sauces of claret, anchovy, and sweet herbs, in which our great-grandfathers delighted, and which was technically termed a Lear. But the grand essay of

skill was the cover of this pasty, whereon the curious cook had contrived to represent all the once-living forms that were now entombed in that gorgeous sepulchre. A Florentine tourte or tansy, an old English custard, a more refined blamango, and a riband jelly of many colours, offered a pleasant relief after these vaster inventions, and the repast closed with a dish of oyster loaves and a pompetone of larks.

Notwithstanding the abstemiousness of his hostess, the Doctor was never deterred from doing justice to her hospitality. Few were the dishes that ever escaped him. The demon dyspepsia had not waved its fell wings over the eighteenth century, and wonderful were the feats then achieved by a country gentleman with the united aid of a good digestion and a good conscience.

The servants had retired and Dr. Masham had taken his last glass of port, and then he rang a bell on the table, and—I trust my fair readers will not be frightened from proceeding

with this history—a servant brought him his pipe. The pipe was well stuffed, duly lighted, and duly puffed; and then, taking it from his mouth, the Doctor spoke.

"And so, my honoured lady, you have got a neighbour at last."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Annabel.

But the claims of the pipe prevented the good Doctor from too quickly satisfying her natural curiosity. Another puff or two, and he then continued.

"Yes," said he, "the old abbey has at last found a tenant."

"A tenant, Doctor?"

"Ay! the best tenant in the world—its proprietor."

"You quite surprise me. When did this occur?"

"They have been there these three days; I have paid them a visit. Mrs. Cadurcis has come to live at the abbey with the little lord."

"This is indeed news to us," said Lady

Annabel; "and what kind of people are they?"

"You know, my dear madam," said the Doctor, just touching the ash of his pipe with his tobacco-stopper of chased silver, "that the present Lord is a very distant relative of the late one?"

Lady Annabel bowed assent.

"The late Lord," continued the Doctor, "who was as strange and wrong-headed a man as ever breathed, though I trust he is in the kingdom of heaven for all that, left all his property to his unlawful children, with the exception of this estate entailed on the title, as all estates should be. 'Tis a fine place, but no great rental. I doubt whether 'tis more than a clear twelve hundred a-year."

"And Mrs. Cadurcis?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"Was an heiress," replied the Doctor, "and the late Mr. Cadurcis a spendthrift. He was a bad manager, and, worse, a bad husband. Pro-

vidence was pleased to summon him suddenly from this mortal scene, but not before he had dissipated the greater part of his wife's means. Mrs. Cadurcis, since she was a widow, has lived in strict seclusion with her little boy, as you may, my dear lady, with your dear little girl. But I am afraid," said the Doctor, shaking his head, "she has not been in the habit of dining as well as we have to-day. A very limited income, my dear madam; a very limited income, indeed. And the guardians, I am told, will only allow the little Lord a hundred a-year; but, on her own income, whatever it may be, and that addition, she has resolved to live at the abbey; and I believe—I believe she has it rent-free; but I don't know."

"Poor woman!" said Lady Annabel, and not without a sigh. "I trust her child is her consolation."

Venetia had not spoken during this conversation, but she had listened to it very attentively. At length she said, "Mamma, is not a widow a wife that has lost her husband?"

"You are right, my dear," said Lady Annabel, rather gravely.

Venetia mused a moment, and then replied, "Pray, mamma, are you a widow?"

"My dear little girl," said Dr. Masham, "go and give that beautiful peacock a pretty piece of cake."

Lady Annabel and the Doctor rose from the table with Venetia, and took a turn in the park, while the Doctor's horses were getting ready.

"I think, my good Lady," said the Doctor, "it would be but an act of Christian charity to call upon Mrs. Cadurcis."

"I was thinking the same," said Lady Annabel; "I am interested by what you have told me of her history and fortunes. We have some woes in common—I hope some joys. It seems that this case should indeed be an exception to my rule."

"I would not ask you to sacrifice your inclinations to the mere pleasures of the world," said the Doctor: "but duties, my dear lady, duties; there are such things as duties to our neighbour;

and here is a case where, believe me, they might be fulfilled."

The Doctor's horses now appeared. Both master and groom wore their pistols in their holsters. The Doctor shook hands warmly with Lady Annabel, and patted Venetia on her head, as she ran up from a little distance, with an eager countenance, to receive her accustomed blessing. Then mounting his stout mare, he once more waved his hand with an air of courtliness to his hostess, and was soon out of sight. Lady Annabel and Venetia returned to the terrace room.

CHAPTER V.

"And so I would, my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort, when Lady Annabel communicated to her faithful attendant, at night, the news of the arrival of the Cadurcis family at the abbey, and her intention of paying Mrs. Cadurcis a visit; "and so I would, my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort, "and it would be but an act of Christian charity after all, as the Doctor says; for, although it is not for me to complain when my betters are satisfied, and after all I am always content, if your ladyship be; still there is no denying the fact, that this is a terrible lonesome life after all. And I cannot help thinking your ladyship has not been looking so well of late, and a little society would

do your ladyship good; and Miss Venetia, too, after all, she wants a playfellow; I am certain sure that I was as tired of playing at ball with her this morning as if I had never sat down in my born days; and, I dare say, the little Lord will play with her all day long."

"If I thought that this visit would lead to what is understood by the word society, my good Pauncefort, I certainly should refrain from paying it," said Lady Annabel, very quietly.

"Oh! Lord, dear my lady, I was not for a moment dreaming of any such thing," replied Mistress Pauncefort; "society, I know as well as any one, means grand balls, Ranelagh, and the masquerades. I can't abide the thought of them, I do assure your ladyship; all I meant was that a quiet dinner now and then with a few friends, a dance perhaps in the evening, or a hand of whisk, or a game of romps at Christmas, when the abbey will of course be quite full, a—"

"I believe there is as little chance of the abbey being full at Christmas, or any other time, as there is of Cherbury," said Lady Annabel. "Mrs. Cadurcis is a widow, with a very slender fortune. Her son will not enjoy his estate until he is of age, and its rental is small. I am led to believe that they will live quite as quietly as ourselves; and when I spoke of Christian charity, I was thinking only of kindness towards them, and not of amusement for ourselves."

"Well, my lady, your la'ship knows best," replied Mistress Pauncefort, evidently very disappointed; for she had indulged in momentary visions of noble visiters and noble valets; "I am always content, you know, when your la'ship is; but, I must say, I think it is very odd for a lord to be so poor. I never heard of such a thing. I think they will turn out richer than you have an idea, my lady. Your la'ship knows 'tis quite a saying, 'As rich as a lord.'"

Lady Annabel smiled, but did not reply.

The next morning the old fawn-coloured chariot, which had not been used since Lady Annabel's arrival at Cherbury, and four black long-tailed coach-horses, that from absolute necessity had been degraded, in the interval, to the service of the cart and the plough, made their appearance, after much bustle and effort, before the hall-door. Although a morning's stroll from Cherbury through the woods, Cadurcis was distant nearly ten miles by the road, and that road was in great part impassable, save in favourable seasons. This visit, therefore, was an expedition; and Lady Annabel, fearing the fatigue for a child, determined to leave Venetia at home, from whom she had actually never been separated one hour in her life. Venetia could not refrain from shedding a tear when her mother embraced and quitted her, and begged, as a last favour, that she might accompany her through the park to the avenue lodge. So Pauncefort and herself entered the chariot, that rocked like a ship, in spite of all the skill of the coachman and the postilion.

Venetia walked home with Mistress Pauncefort, but Lady Annabel's little daughter was not in her usual lively spirits; many a butterfly glanced around without attracting her pursuit, and the deer trooped by without eliciting a single observation. At length she said, in a very thoughtful tone, "Mistress Pauncefort, I should have liked to have gone and seen the little boy."

"You shall go and see him another day, Miss," replied her attendant.

"Mistress Pauncefort," said Venetia, "are you a widow?"

Mistress Pauncefort almost started; had the inquiry been made by a man, she would almost have supposed he was going to be very rude. She was indeed very much surprised.

"And pray, Miss Venetia, what could put it in your head to ask such an odd question?" exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort. "A widow! Miss Venetia; I have never yet changed my name, and I shall not in a hurry, that I can tell you."

"Do widows change their names?" said Venetia.

"All women change their names when they marry," responded Mistress Pauncefort.

"Is mamma married?" inquired Venetia.

"La! Miss Venetia. Well, to be sure, you do ask the strangest questions. Married! To be sure she is married," said Mistress Pauncefort, exceedingly flustered.

"And whom is she married to?" pursued the unwearied Venetia.

"Your papa, to be sure," said Mistress Pauncefort, blushing up to her eyes, and looking very confused; "that is to say, Miss Venetia, you are never to ask questions about such subjects. Have not I often told you it is not pretty?"

"Why is it not pretty?" said Venetia.

"Because it is not proper," said Mistress Pauncefort; "because your mamma does not like you to ask such questions, and she will be very angry with me for answering them, I can tell you that."

"I tell you what, Mistress Pauncefort," said Venetia, "I think mamma is a widow."

"And what then, Miss Venetia? There is no shame in that."

"Shame!" exclaimed Venetia. "What is shame?"

"Look, there is a pretty butterfly!" exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort. "Did you ever see such a pretty butterfly, Miss?"

"I do not care about butterflies to-day, Mistress Pauncefort; I like to talk about widows."

"Was there ever such a child?" exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort, with a wondering glance.

"I must have had a papa," said Venetia; "all the ladies I read about had papas, and married husbands. Then whom did my mamma marry?"

"Lord! Miss Venetia, you know very well your mamma always tells you that all those books you read are a pack of stories," observed Mistress Pauncefort, with an air of triumphant art.

"There never were such persons, perhaps," said Venetia, "but it is not true that there never were such things as papas and husbands,

for all people have papas; you must have had a papa, Mistress Pauncefort?"

"To be sure I had," said Mistress Pauncefort, bridling up.

"And a mamma, too?" said Venetia.

"As honest a woman as ever lived," said Mistress Pauncefort.

"Then if I have no papa, mamma must be a wife that has lost her husband, and that, mamma told me at dinner yesterday, was a widow."

"Was the like ever seen?" exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort. "And what then, Miss Venetia?"

"It seems to me so odd that only two people should live here, and both be widows," said Venetia, "and both have a little child; the only difference is, that one is a little boy, and I am a little girl."

"When ladies lose their husbands, they do not like to have their names mentioned," said Mistress Pauncefort; "and so you must never

talk of your papa to my lady, and that is the truth."

"I will not now," said Venetia.

When they returned home, Mistress Pauncefort brought her work, and seated herself on the terrace, that she might not lose sight of her charge. Venetia played about for some little time; she made a castle behind a tree, and fancied she was a knight, and then a lady, and conjured up an ogre in the neighbouring shrubbery; but these day-dreams did not amuse her as much as usual. She went and fetched her book, but even "The Seven Champions" could not interest her. Her eye was fixed upon the page, and apparently she was absorbed in her pursuit, but her mind wandered, and the page was never turned. She indulged in an unconscious reverie; her fancy was with her mother on her visit; the old abbey rose up before her: she painted the scene without an effort: the court, with the fountain; the grand room, with the tapestry hangings; that desolate garden, with the fallen

statues; and that long, gloomy gallery. And in all these scenes appeared that little boy, who, somehow or other, seemed wonderfully blended with her imaginings. It was a very long day this; Venetia dined alone with Mistress Pauncefort; the time hung very heavy; at length she fell asleep in Mistress Pauncefort's lap. A sound roused her,—the carriage had returned; she ran to greet her mother, but there was no news;—Mrs. Cadurcis had been absent; she had gone to a distant town to buy some furniture; and, after all, Lady Annabel had not seen the little boy.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days after the visit to Cadurcis, when Lady Annabel was sitting alone, a post-chaise drove up to the hall, whence issued a short and very stout woman with a rubicund countenance, and dressed in a style which remarkably blended the shabby with the tawdry. She was accompanied by a boy between eleven and twelve years of age, whose appearance, however, very much contrasted with that of his mother, for he was very pale and slender, with long curling black hair and large black eyes, which occasionally, by their transient flashes, agreeably relieved a face, the general expression of which might be esteemed somewhat shy and sullen. The lady, of course, was Mrs. Cadurcis, who

was received by Lady Annabel with the greatest courtesy.

"A terrible journey," exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, fanning herself as she took her seat, "and so very hot! Plantagenet, my love, make your bow; have not I always told you to make a bow when you enter a room, especially where there are strangers? This is Lady Annabel Herbert, who was so kind as to call upon us. Make your bow to Lady Annabel."

The boy gave a sort of sulky nod, but Lady Annabel received it so graciously and expressed herself so kindly to him that his features relaxed a little, though he was quite silent and sat on the edge of his chair, the picture of dogged indifference.

"Charming country, Lady Annabel," said Mrs. Cadurcis, "but worse roads, if possible, than we had in Northumberland, where, indeed, there were no roads at all. Cherbury a delightful place, very unlike the abbey; dreadfully lonesome I assure you I find it, Lady Annabel.

Great change for us from a little town and all our kind neighbours. Very different from Morpeth; is it not, Plantagenet?"

"I hate Morpeth," said the boy.

"Hate Morpeth!" exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, "Well, I am sure, that is very ungrateful, with so many kind friends as we always found. Besides, Plantagenet, have I not always told you that you are to hate nothing? It is very wicked. The trouble it costs me, Lady Annabel, to educate this dear child!" continued Mrs. Cadurcis, turning to Lady Annabel, and speaking in a semi-tone. "I have done it all myself, I assure you; and, when he likes, he can be as good as any one. Can't you, Plantagenet?"

Lord Cadurcis gave a grim smile; seated himself at the very back of the deep chair and swung his feet, which no longer reached the ground, to and fro.

"I am sure that Lord Cadurcis always behaves well," said Lady Annabel.

"There, Plantagenet," exclaimed Mrs. Ca-

durcis, "only listen to that. Hear what Lady Annabel Herbert says; she is sure you always behave well. Now mind, never give her ladyship cause to change her opinion."

Plantagenet curled his lip, and half-turned his back on his companions.

"I regretted so much that I was not at home when you did me the honour to call," resumed Mrs. Cadurcis; "but I had gone over for the day to Southport, buying furniture. What a business it is to buy furniture, Lady Annabel!" added Mrs. Cadurcis, with a piteous expression.

"It is indeed very troublesome," said Lady Annabel.

"Ah! you have none of these cares," continued Mrs. Cadurcis, surveying the pretty apartment. "What a difference between Cherbury and the abbey! I suppose you have never been there?"

"Indeed it is one of my favourite walks," answered Lady Annabel, "and some two years

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ago I even took the liberty of walking through the house."

"Was there ever such a place!" exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis. "I assure you my poor head turns, whenever I try to find my way about it. But the trustees offered it us, and I thought it my duty to my son to reside there. Besides it was a great offer to a widow; if poor Mr. Cadurcis had been alive it would have been different. I hardly know what I shall do there, particularly in winter. My spirits are always dreadfully low. I only hope Plantagenet will behave well. If he goes into his tantarums at the abbey, and particularly in winter, I hardly know what will become of me!"

"I am sure Lord Cadurcis will do every thing to make the abbey comfortable to you. Besides it is but a very short walk from Cherbury, and you must come very often and see us."

"Oh! Plantagenet can be good if he likes, I

can assure you, Lady Annabel; and behave as properly as any little boy I know. Plantagenet my dear, speak. Have not I always told you, when you pay a visit, that you should open your mouth now and then. I don't like chatting children," added Mrs. Cadurcis, "but I like them to answer when they are spoken to."

"Nobody has spoken to me," said Lord Cadurcis, in a sullen tone.

"Plantagenet, my love!" said his mother in a solemn voice.

"Well, mother, what do you want?"

"Plantagenet, my love, you know you promised me to be good!"

"Well! what have I done?"

"Lord Cadurcis," said Lady Annabel, interfering, "do you like to look at pictures?"

"Thank you," replied the little lord, in a more courteous tone, "I like to be left alone."

"Did you ever know such an odd child!" said Mrs. Cadurcis; "and yet, Lady Annabel, you must not judge him by what you see. I

do assure you he can behave, when he likes, as pretty as possible."

"Pretty!" muttered the little lord between his teeth.

"If you had only seen him at Morpeth sometimes at a little tea party," said Mrs. Cadurcis; "he really was quite the ornament of the company."

"No, I wasn't," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Plantagenet!" said his mother again in a solemn tone, "have I not always told you that you are never to contradict any one?"

The little lord indulged in a suppressed growl.

"There was a little play last Christmas," continued Mrs. Cadurcis, "and he acted quite delightfully. Now you would not think that from the way he sits upon that chair. Plantagenet, my dear, I do insist upon your behaving yourself. Sit like a man."

"I am not a man," said Lord Cadurcis very quietly; "I wish I were."

"Plantagenet!" said the mother, "have not

I always told you that you are never to answer me? It is not proper for children to answer. Oh! Lady Annabel, if you knew what it cost me to educate my son. He never does anything I wish, and it is so provoking, because I know that he can behave as properly as possible if he likes. He does it to provoke me,—you know you do it to provoke me, you little brat; now, sit properly sir; I do, desire you to sit properly. How vexatious that you should call at Cherbury for the first time, and behave in this manner! Plantagenet, do you hear me?" exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, with a face reddening to scarlet, and almost menacing a move from her seat.

"Yes, every body hears you, Mrs. Cadurcis," said the little lord.

"Don't call me Mrs. Cadurcis," exclaimed the mother in a dreadful rage. "That is not the way to speak to your mother. I will not be called Mrs. Cadurcis by you. Don't answer me, sir,—I desire you not to answer me. I have

half a mind to get up and give you a good shake, that I have. O Lady Annabel," sighed Mrs. Cadurcis, while a tear trickled down her cheek, "if you only knew the life I lead, and what trouble it costs me to educate that child!"

"My dear madam," said Lady Annabel, "I am sure that Lord Cadurcis has no other wish but to please you. Indeed you have misunderstood him."

"Yes! she always misunderstands me," said Lord Cadurcis in a softer tone, but with pouting lips and suffused eyes.

"Now he is going on," said his mother, beginning herself to cry dreadfully. "He knows my weak heart; he knows nobody in the world loves him like his mother; and this is the way he treats me."

"My dear Mrs. Cadurcis," said Lady Annabel, "pray take luncheon, after your long drive; and Lord Cadurcis, I am sure you must be fatigued."

"Thank you, I never eat, my dear lady," said

Mrs. Cadurcis, " except at my meals. But one glass of Mountain, if you please, I would just take the liberty of tasting, for the weather is so dreadfully hot; and Plantagenet has so aggravated me, I really do not feel myself."

Lady Annabel sounded her silver hand-bell, and the butler brought some cakes and the Mountain. Mrs. Cadurcis revived by virtue of her single glass, and the providential co-operation of a few subsequent ones. Even the cakes and the Mountain, however, would not tempt her son to open his mouth; and this, in spite of her returning composure, drove her to desperation. A conviction that the Mountain and the cakes were delicious, an amiable desire that the palate of her spoiled child should be gratified, some reasonable maternal anxiety that after so long and fatiguing a drive he in fact needed some refreshment, and the agonising consciousness that all her own physical pleasure at the moment was destroyed by the mental sufferings she endured at having quarrelled with her son, and

that he was depriving himself of what was so agreeable only to pique her, quite overwhelmed the ill-regulated mind of this fond mother. Between each sip and each mouthful, she appealed to him to follow her example, now with cajolery, now with menace, till at length, worked up by the united stimulus of her copious draughts of Mountain and her own ungovernable rage, she dashed down the glass and unfinished slice of cake, and, before the astonished Lady Annabel, rushed forward to give him what she had long threatened, and what she in general ultimately had recourse to—a good shake.

Her agile son, experienced in these storms, escaped in time, and pushed his chair before his infuriated mother; Mrs. Cadurcis, however, rallied, and chased him round the room; once more she flattered herself she had captured him, once more he evaded her; in her despair she took up Venetia's "Seven Champions," and threw the volume at his head; he laughed a fiendish laugh, as, ducking his head, the book flew on,

and dashed through a pane of glass; Mrs. Cadurcis made a desperate charge, and her son, a little frightened at her almost maniacal passion, saved himself by suddenly seizing Lady Annabel's work-table, and whirling it before her; Mrs. Cadurcis fell over the leg of the table, and went into violent hysterics; while the blood-hound, who had long started from his repose, looked at his mistress for instructions, and in the mean time continued barking. The astonished and agitated Lady Annabel assisted Mrs. Cadurcis to rise, and led her to a couch. Lord Cadurcis, pale and dogged, stood in a corner, and after all this uproar there was a comparative calm, only broken by the sobs of the mother, each instant growing fainter and fainter.

At this moment the door opened, and Mistress Pauncefort ushered in the little Venetia. She really looked like an angel of peace sent from heaven on a mission of concord, with her long golden hair, her bright face, and smile of ineffable loveliness.

"Mamma!" said Venetia, in the sweetest tone.

"Hush! darling," said Lady Annabel, "this lady is not very well."

Mrs. Cadurcis opened her eyes and sighed. She beheld Venetia, and stared at her with a feeling of wonder. "O! Lady Annabel," she faintly exclaimed, "what must you think of me! But was there ever such an unfortunate mother! and I have not a thought in the world but for that boy. I have devoted my life to him, and never would have buried myself in this abbey but for his sake. And this is the way he treats me, and his father before him treated me even worse. Am I not the most unfortunate woman you ever knew?"

"My dear madam," said the kind Lady Annabel, in a soothing tone, "you will be very happy yet. All will be quite right and quite happy."

"Is this angel your child?" inquired Mrs. Cadurcis, in a low voice.

"This is my little girl—Venetia. Come hither, Venetia, and speak to Mrs. Cadurcis."

"How do you do, Mrs. Cadurcis?" said Venetia. "I am so glad you have come to live at the abbey."

"The angel!" exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis. "The sweet seraph! Oh! why did not my Plantagenet speak to you, Lady Annabel, in the same tone? And he can, if he likes;—he can, indeed. It was his silence that so mortified me; it was his silence that led to all. I am so proud of him! and then he comes here, and never speaks a word. O! Plantagenet, I am sure you will break my heart."

Venetia went up to the little lord in the corner, and gently stroked his dark cheek. "Are you the little boy?" she said.

Cadurcis looked at her; at first the glance was rather fierce, but it instantly relaxed. "What is your name?" he said, in a low, but not unkind, tone.

"Venetia."

"I like you, Venetia," said the boy. "Do you live here?"

"Yes, with my mamma."

"I like your mamma, too; but not as much as you. I like your gold hair."

"Oh, how funny! to like my gold hair!"

"If you had come in sooner," said Cadurcis, "we should not have had this row."

"What is a row, little boy?" said Venetia.

"Do not call me little boy," he said, but not in an unkind tone; "call me by my name."

"What is your name?"

"Lord Cadurcis; but you may call me by my Christian name, because I like you."

"What is your Christian name?"

"Plantagenet."

"Plantagenet! What a long name!" said Venetia. "Tell me, then, Plantagenet, what is a row?"

"What often takes place between me and my

mother, but which I am very sorry now has happened here, for I like this place, and should like to come often. A row is a quarrel."

"A quarrel! What! do you quarrel with your mamma?"

"Often."

"Why, then, you are not a good boy."

"Ah! my mamma is not like yours," said the little lord, with a sigh. "It is not my fault. But now I want to make it up; how shall I do it?"

"Go and give her a kiss."

"Poh! that is not the way."

"Shall I go and ask my mamma what is best to do?" said Venetia, and she stole away on tiptoe, and whispered to Lady Annabel that Plantagenet wanted her. Her mother came forward and invited Lord Cadurcis to walk on the terrace with her, leaving Venetia to amuse her other guest.

Lady Annabel, though very kind, was very frank and firm in her unexpected confidential

interview with her new friend. She placed before him very clearly the enormity of his conduct, which no provocation could justify; it was a violation of divine law, as well as human propriety. She found the little lord attentive, tractable, and repentant, and, what might not have been expected, exceedingly ingenious and intelligent. His observations, indeed, were distinguished by remarkable acuteness; and though he could not, and indeed did not even attempt to vindicate his conduct, he incidentally introduced much that might be urged in its extenuation. There was, indeed, in this his milder moment, something very winning in his demeanour, and Lady Annabel deeply regretted that a nature of so much promise and capacity should, by the injudicious treatment of a parent, at once fond and violent, afford such slight hopes of future happiness. It was arranged between Lord Cadurcis and Lady Annabel that she should lead him to his mother, and that he should lament the past, and

ask her forgiveness; so they re-entered the room. Venetia was listening to a very long story from Mrs. Cadurcis, who appeared to have entirely recovered herself; but her countenance assumed a befitting expression of grief and gravity when she observed her son.

"My dear madam," said Lady Annabel, "your son is very unhappy that he should have offended you, and he has asked my kind offices to effect a perfect reconciliation between a child who wishes to be dutiful to a parent who, he feels, has always been so affectionate."

Mrs. Cadurcis began crying.

"Mother," said her son, "I am sorry for what has occurred; mine was the fault. I shall not be happy till you pardon me."

"No, yours was not the fault," said poor Mrs. Cadurcis, crying very bitterly. "Oh! no, it was not; I was in fault, only I. There, Lady Annabel, did I not tell you he was the sweetest, dearest, most generous-hearted creature that ever lived? Oh! if he would only always speak so, I am

sure I should be the happiest woman that ever breathed! He puts me in mind quite of his poor dear father, who was an angel upon earth; he was indeed, when he was not vexed. O! my dear Plantagenet! my only hope and joy! you are the treasure and consolation of my life, and always will be. God bless you, my darling child! You shall have that pony you wanted; I am sure I can manage it: I did not think I could."

As Lady Annabel thought it was as well that the mother and the son should not be immediately thrown together after this storm, she very kindly proposed that they should remain, and pass the day at Cherbury; and as Plantagenet's eyes brightened at the proposal, it did not require much trouble to persuade his mother to accede to it. The day, that had commenced so inauspiciously, turned out one of the most agreeable, both to Mrs. Cadurcis and her child. The two mothers conversed together, and, as Mrs. Cadurcis was a great workwoman, there was at least

one bond of sympathy between her and the tapestry of her hostess. Then they all took a stroll in the park ; and as Mrs. Cadurcis was not able to walk for any length of time, the children were permitted to stroll about together, attended by Mistress Pauncefort, while Mrs. Cadurcis, chatting without ceasing, detailed to Lady Annabel all the history of her life, all the details of her various complaints and her economical arrangements, and all the secrets of her husband's treatment of her,—that favourite subject on which she ever waxed most eloquent. Plantagenet, equally indulging in confidence, which with him, however, was very unusual, poured all his soul into the charmed ear of Venetia. He told her how he and his mother had lived at Morpeth, and how he hated it; how poor they had been, and how rich he should be; how he loved the abbey, and especially the old gallery, and the drums and armour; how he had been a day-scholar at a little school which he abhorred, and

how he was to go some day to Eton, of which he was very proud.

At length they were obliged to return, and when dinner was over the post-chaise was announced. Mrs. Cadurcis parted from Lady Annabel with all the warm expressions of a heart naturally kind and generous; and Plantagenet embraced Venetia, and promised that the next day he would find his way alone from Cadurcis, through the wood, and come and take another walk with her.

CHAPTER VII.

This settlement of Mrs. Cadurcis and her son in the neighbourhood was an event of no slight importance in the life of the family at Cherbury. Venetia at length found a companion of her own age, itself an incident which, in its influence upon her character and pursuits, was not to be disregarded. There grew up between the little lord and the daughter of Lady Annabel that fond intimacy which not rarely occurs in childhood. Plantagenet and Venetia quickly imbibed for each other a singular affection, not displeasing to Lady Annabel, who observed, without dissatisfaction, the increased happiness of her child, and encouraged

by her kindness the frequent visits of the boy, who soon learnt the shortest road from the abbey, and almost daily scaled the hill, and traced his way through the woods, to the hall. There was much, indeed, in the character and the situation of Lord Cadurcis which interested Lady Annabel Herbert. His mild, engaging, and affectionate manners, when he was removed from the injudicious influence of his mother, won upon her feelings; she felt for this lone child, whom nature had gifted with so soft a heart and with a thoughtful mind whose out-breaks not unfrequently attracted her notice; with none to guide him, and with only one heart to look up to for fondness; and that, too, one that had already contrived to forfeit the respect even of so young a child.

Yet Lady Annabel was too sensible of the paramount claims of a mother—herself, indeed, too jealous of any encroachment on the full privileges of maternal love—to sanction in the slightest degree, by her behaviour, any neglect

of Mrs. Cadurcis by her son. For his sake, therefore, she courted the society of her new neighbour; and although Mrs. Cadurcis offered little to engage Lady Annabel's attention as a companion, though she was violent in her temper, far from well informed, and—from the society in which, in spite of her original good birth, her later years had passed—very far from being refined, she was not without her good qualities. She was generous, kind-hearted, and grateful; not insensible of her own deficiencies, and respectable from her misfortunes. Lady Annabel was one of those who always judged individuals rather by their good qualities than their bad. With the exception of her violent temper, which—under the control of Lady Annabel's presence, and by the aid of all that kind person's skilful management—Mrs. Cadurcis generally contrived to bridle, her principal faults were those of manner, which, from the force of habit, every day became less painful. Mrs. Cadurcis—who, indeed, was only a child of a

larger growth—became scarcely less attached to the Herbert family than her son; she felt that her life, under their influence, was happier and serener than of yore; that there were less domestic broils than in old days; that her son was more dutiful; and, as she could not help suspecting, though she found it difficult to analyse the cause, herself more amiable. The truth was, Lady Annabel always treated Mrs. Cadurcis with studied respect; and the children, and especially Venetia, followed her example. Mrs. Cadurcis' self-complacency was not only less shocked, but more gratified, than before; and this was the secret of her happiness. For no one was more mortified by her rages, when they were past, than Mrs. Cadurcis herself; she felt they compromised her dignity, and had lost her all moral command over a child whom she loved at the bottom of her heart with a kind of wild passion, though she would menace and strike him, and who often precipitated these paroxysms by denying his mother that duty and affection

which were, after all, the great charm and pride of her existence.

As Mrs. Cadurcis was unable to walk to Cherbury, and as Plantagenet soon fell into the habit of passing every morning at the hall, Lady Annabel was frequent in her visits to the mother, and soon she persuaded Mrs. Cadurcis to order the old post-chaise regularly on Saturday, and remain at Cherbury until the following Monday; by these means both families united together in the chapel at divine service, while the presence of Dr. Masham, at their now increased Sunday dinner, was an incident in the monotonous life of Mrs. Cadurcis far from displeasing to her. The Doctor gave her a little news of the neighbourhood, and of the country in general; amused her with an occasional anecdote of the Queen and the young Princesses; and always lent her the last number of "Sylvanus Urban."

This weekly visit to Cherbury, the great personal attention which she always received there, and the frequent morning walks of Lady Anna-

bel to the abbey, effectually repressed on the whole the jealousy which was a characteristic of Mrs. Cadurcis' nature, and which the constant absence of her son from her in the mornings might otherwise have fatally developed. But Mrs. Cadurcis could not resist the conviction that the Herberts were as much her friends as her child's; her jealousy was balanced by her gratitude; she was daily, almost hourly, sensible of some kindness of Lady Annabel, for there were a thousand services in the power of the opulent and ample establishment of Cherbury to afford the limited and desolate household at the abbey. Living in seclusion, it is difficult to refrain from imbibing even a strong regard for our almost solitary companion, however incompatible may be our pursuits, and however our tastes may vary, especially when that companion is grateful, and duly sensible of the condescension of our intimacy. And so it happened that, before a year had elapsed, that very Mrs. Cadurcis, whose first introduction at Cherbury had

been so unfavourable to her, and from whose temper and manners the elegant demeanour and the disciplined mind of Lady Annabel Herbert might have been excused for a moment revolting, had succeeded in establishing a strong hold upon the affections of her refined neighbour, who sought, on every occasion, her society, and omitted few opportunities of contributing to her comfort and welfare.

In the mean time her son was the companion of Venetia, both in her pastimes and studies. The education of Lord Cadurcis had received no further assistance than was afforded by the little grammar-school at Morpeth, where he had passed three or four years as a day-scholar, and where his mother had invariably taken his part on every occasion that he had incurred the displeasure of his master. There he had obtained some imperfect knowledge of Latin; yet the boy was fond of reading, and had picked up, in an odd way, more knowledge than might have been supposed. He had read "Baker's Chronicle,"

and "The Old Universal History," and "Plutarch;" and had turned over—in the book-room of an old gentleman at Morpeth, who had been attracted by his intelligence—not a few curious old folios, from which he had gleaned no contemptible store of curious instances of human nature. His guardian, whom he had never seen, and who was a great nobleman and lived in London, had signified to Mrs. Cadurcis his intention of sending his ward to Eton; but that time had not yet arrived, and Mrs. Cadurcis, who dreaded parting with her son, determined to postpone it by every maternal artifice in her power. At present it would have seemed that her son's intellect was to be left utterly uncultivated, for there was no school in the neighbourhood which he could attend, and no occasional assistance which could be obtained; and to the constant presence of a tutor in the house Mrs. Cadurcis was not less opposed than his lordship could have been himself.

It was by degrees that Lord Cadurcis became

the partner of Venetia in her studies. Lady Annabel had consulted Dr. Masham about the poor little boy, whose neglected state she deplored; and the good Doctor had offered to ride over to Cherbury at least once a week, besides Sunday, provided Lady Annabel would undertake that his directions, in his absence, should be attended to. This her ladyship promised cheerfully; nor had she any difficulty in persuading Cadurcis to consent to the arrangement. He listened with docility and patience to her representation of the fatal effects, in his after-life, of his neglected education; of the generous and advantageous offer of Dr. Masham; and how cheerfully she would exert herself to assist his endeavours, if Plantagenet would willingly submit to her supervision. The little lord expressed to her his determination to do all that she desired, and voluntarily promised her that she should never repent her goodness. And he kept his word. So every morning, with the full concurrence of Mrs. Cadurcis, whose advice and

opinion on the affair were most formally solicited by Lady Annabel, Plantagenet arrived early at the hall, and took his writing and French lessons with Venetia, and then they alternately read aloud to Lady Annabel from the histories of Hooke and Echard. When Venetia repaired to her drawing, Cadurcis sat down to his Latin exercise, and, in encouraging and assisting him, Lady Annabel, a proficient in Italian, began herself to learn the ancient language of the Romans. With such a charming mistress even these Latin exercises were achieved. In vain Cadurcis, after turning leaf over leaf, would look round with a piteous air to his fair assistant —"O! Lady Annabel, I am sure the word is not in the dictionary;" Lady Annabel was in a moment at his side, and, by some magic of her fair fingers the word would somehow or other make its appearance. After a little exposure of this kind, Plantagenet would labour with double energy, until, heaving a deep sigh of exhaustion and vexation, he would burst forth—"O! Lady

Annabel, indeed there is not a nominative case in this sentence." And then Lady Annabel would quit her easel, with her pencil in her hand, and give all her intellect to the puzzling construction; at length, she would say, "I think, Plantagenet, this must be our nominative case;" and so it always was.

Thus, when Wednesday came, the longest and most laborious morning of all Lord Cadurcis' studies, and when he neither wrote, nor read, nor learnt French with Venetia, but gave up all his soul to Dr. Masham, he usually acquitted himself to that good person's satisfaction, who left him, in general, with commendations that were not lost on the pupil, and plenty of fresh exercises to occupy him and Lady Annabel until the next week. When a year had thus passed away, the happiest year yet in Lord Cadurcis' life, in spite of all his disadvantages, he had contrived to make no inconsiderable progress. Almost deprived of a tutor, he had advanced in classical acquirement more than

during the whole of his preceding years of scholarship; while his hand-writing began to become intelligible, he could read French with comparative facility, and had turned over many a volume in the well-stored library at Cherbury.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the hours of study were past, the children, with that zest for play which occupation can alone secure, would go forth together, and wander in the park. Here they had made a little world for themselves, of which no one dreamed; for Venetia had poured forth all her Arcadian lore into the ear of Plantagenet, and they acted together many of the adventures of the romance, under the fond names of Musidorus and Philoclea. Cherbury was Arcadia, and Cadurcis Macedon; while the intervening woods figured as the forests of Thessaly, and the breezy downs were the heights of Pindus. Unwearied was the innocent sport of their virgin

imaginations; and it was a great treat if Venetia, attended by Mistress Pauncefort, were permitted to accompany Plantagenet some way on his return. Then they parted with an embrace in the woods of Thessaly, and Musidorus strolled home with a heavy heart to his Macedonian realm.

Parted from Venetia, the magic suddenly seemed to cease, and Musidorus was instantly transformed into the little Lord Cadurcis, exhausted by the unconscious efforts of his fancy, depressed by the separation from his sweet companion, and shrinking from the unpoetical reception which at the best awaited him in his ungenial home. Often, when thus alone, would he loiter on his way and seat himself on the ridge, and watch the setting sun, as its dying glory illumined the turrets of his ancient house, and burnished the waters of the lake, until the tears stole down his cheek; and yet he knew not why. No thoughts of sorrow had flitted through his mind, nor indeed had ideas of any

description occurred to him. It was a trance of unmeaning abstraction; all that he felt was a mystical pleasure in watching the sunset, and a conviction that, if he were not with Venetia, that which he loved next best was to be alone.

The little Cadurcis in general returned home moody and silent, and his mother too often, irritated by his demeanour, indulged in all the expressions of a quick and offended temper; but since his intimacy with the Herberts, Plantagenet had learnt to control his emotions, and often successfully laboured to prevent those scenes of domestic recrimination once so painfully frequent. There often, too, was a note from Lady Annabel to Mrs. Cadurcis, or some other slight memorial, borne by her son, which enlisted all the kind feelings of that lady in favour of her Cherbury friends, and then the evening was sure to pass over in peace; and, when Plantagenet was not thus armed, he exerted himself to be cordial; and so, on the whole, with some skill in management, and some trials of temper, the

mother and the child contrived to live together with far greater comfort than they had of old.

Bed-time was always a great relief to Plantagenet, for it secured him solitude. He would lie awake for hours, indulging in sweet and unconscious reveries, and brooding over the future morn, that always brought happiness. All that he used to sigh for was to be Lady Annabel's son; were he Venetia's brother, then he was sure he never should be for a moment unhappy—that parting from Cherbury, and the gloomy evenings at Cadurcis, would then be avoided. In such a mood, and lying awake upon his pillow, he sought refuge from the painful reality that surrounded him in the creative solace of his imagination. Alone, in his little bed, Cadurcis was Venetia's brother, and he conjured up a thousand scenes in which they were never separated, and wherein he always played an amiable and graceful part. Yet he loved the abbey; his painful infancy was not associated with that scene; it was not con-

nected with any of those grovelling common-places of his life, from which he had shrunk back with instinctive disgust, even at a very tender age. Cadurcis was the spot to which, in his most miserable moments at Morpeth, he had always looked forward, as the only chance of emancipation from the distressing scene that surrounded him. He had been brought up with a due sense of his future position, and although he had ever affected a haughty indifference on the subject, from his disrelish for the coarse acquaintances who were perpetually reminding him, with chuckling self-complacency, of his future greatness, in secret he had ever brooded over his destiny as his only consolation. He had imbibed from his own reflections, at a very early period of life, a due sense of the importance of his lot; he was proud of his hereditary honours, blended, as they were, with some glorious passages in the history of his country, and prouder of his still more ancient line. The eccentric exploits and the violent

passions, by which his race had been ever characterised, were to him a source of secret exultation. Even the late lord, who certainly had no claims to his gratitude, for he had robbed the inheritance to the utmost of his power, commanded, from the wild decision of his life, the savage respect of his successor. In vain Mrs. Cadurcis would pour forth upon this, the favourite theme for her wrath and her lamentations, all the bitter expressions of her rage and woe. Plantagenet had never imbibed her prejudices against the departed, and had often irritated his mother by maintaining that the late lord was perfectly justified in his conduct.

But in these almost daily separations between Plantagenet and Venetia, how different was her lot to that of her companion! She was the confidante of all his domestic sorrows, and often he had requested her to exert her influence to obtain some pacifying missive from Lady Annabel, which might secure him a quiet evening at

Cadurcis; and whenever this had not been obtained, the last words of Venetia were ever not to loiter, and to remember to speak to his mother as much as he possibly could. Venetia returned to a happy home, welcomed by the smile of a soft and beautiful parent, and with words of affection sweeter than music. She found an engaging companion, who had no thought but for her welfare, her amusement, and her instruction; and often, when the curtains were drawn, the candles lit, and Venetia, holding her mother's hand, opened her book, she thought of poor Plantagenet, so differently situated, with no one to be kind to him, with no one to sympathise with his thoughts, and perhaps, at the very moment, goaded into some unhappy quarrel with his mother.

CHAPTER IX.

The appearance of the Cadurcis family on the limited stage of her life, and the engrossing society of her companion, had entirely distracted the thoughts of Venetia from a subject to which in old days they were constantly recurring, and that was her father. By a process which had often perplexed her, and which she could never succeed in analysing, there had arisen in her mind, without any ostensible agency on the part of her mother which she could distinctly recal, a conviction that this was a topic on which she was never to speak. This idea had once haunted her, and she had seldom found herself alone without almost unconsciously musing over it. Notwithstanding the unvarying

kindness of Lady Annabel, she exercised over her child a complete and unquestioned control. Venetia was brought up with strictness, which was only not felt to be severe, because the system was founded on the most entire affection but, fervent as her love was for her mother, it was equalled by her profound respect, which every word and action of Lady Annabel tended to maintain.

In all the confidential effusions with Plantagenet, Venetia had never dwelt upon this mysterious subject; indeed in these conversations when they treated of their real and not ideal life, Venetia was a mere recipient: all that she could communicate, Plantagenet could observe; he it was who avenged himself at these moments for his habitual silence before third persons; it was to Venetia that he poured forth all his soul, and she was never weary of hearing his stories about Morpeth, and all his sorrows, disgusts, and afflictions. There was scarcely an individual in that little town with whom, from his lively nar-

ratives, she was not familiar; and it was to her sympathising heart that he confided all his future hopes and prospects, and confessed the strong pride he experienced in being a Cadurcis, which from all others was studiously concealed.

It had happened that the first Christmas-day after the settlement of the Cadurcis family at the abbey occurred in the middle of the week; and as the weather was severe, in order to prevent two journeys at such an inclement season, Lady Annabel persuaded Mrs. Cadurcis to pass the whole week at the hall. This arrangement gave such pleasure to Plantagenet that the walls of the abbey, as the old post-chaise was preparing for their journey, quite resounded with his merriment. In vain, his mother, harassed with all the mysteries of packing, indulged in a thousand irritable expressions, which at any other time might have produced a broil or even a fray; Cadurcis did nothing but laugh. There was at the bottom of this boy's heart, with all his habitual gravity and reserve, a fund of humour which would

occasionally break out, and which nothing could withstand. When he was alone with Venetia, he would imitate the old maids of Morpeth, and all the ceremonies of a provincial tea party, with so much life and genuine fun, that Venetia was often obliged to stop in their rambles to indulge her overwhelming mirth. When they were alone, and he was gloomy, she was often accustomed to say, "Now, dear Plantagenet, tell me how the old ladies at Morpeth drink tea."

This morning at the abbey Cadurcis was irresistible, and, the more excited his mother became with the difficulties which beset her, the more gay and fluent were his quips and cranks. Puffing, panting, and perspiring, now directing her waiting-woman, now scolding her man-servant, and now ineffectually attempting to box her son's ears, Mrs. Cadurcis indeed offered a most ridiculous spectacle.

"John!" screamed Mrs. Cadurcis, in a voice of bewildered passion, and stamping with rage,

" is that the place for my cap-box! You do it on purpose, that you do!"

"John," mimicked Lord Cadurcis, "How dare you do it on purpose!"

"Take that, you brat," shrieked the mother, and she struck her own hand against the doorway. "Oh! I'll give it you, I'll give it you," she bellowed under the united influence of rage and pain, and she pursued her agile child, who dodged her on the other side of the post-chaise, which he persisted in calling the family carriage.

"Oh! ma'am, my lady," exclaimed the waiting-woman, sallying forth from the abbey, "what is to be done with the parrot when we are away? Mrs. Brown says she won't see to it, that she won't; 't aynt her place."

This rebellion of Mrs. Brown was a diversion in favour of Plantagenet. Mrs. Cadurcis waddled down the cloisters with precipitation, rushed into the kitchen, seized the surprised Mrs. Brown by the shoulder, and gave her a good shake; and darting at the cage, which held

the parrot, she bore it in triumph to the carriage. "I will take the bird with me," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

"We cannot take the bird inside, madam," said Plantagenet, "for it will overhear all our conversation, and repeat it. We shall not be able to abuse our friends."

Mrs. Cadurcis threw the cage at her son's head, who, for the sake of the bird, dexterously caught it, but declared at the same time he would immediately throw it into the lake. Then Mrs. Cadurcis began to cry with rage, and, seating herself on the open steps of the chaise, sobbed hysterically. Plantagenet stole round on tip-toe, and peeped in her face;—"A merry Christmas and a happy new year, Mrs. Cadurcis!" said her son.

"How can I be merry and happy, treated as I am?" sobbed the mother. "You do not treat Lady Annabel so. Oh! no, it is only your mother whom you use in this manner! Go to Cherbury. Go by all means, but go by your-

self; I shall not go: go to your friends, Lord Cadurcis; they are your friends, not mine, and I hope they are satisfied, now that they have robbed me of the affections of my child. I have seen what they have been after all this time. I am not so blind as some people think. No! I see how it is. I am nobody. Your poor mother, who brought you up, and educated you, is nobody. This is the end of all your Latin and French, and your fine lessons. Honour your father and your mother, Lord Cadurcis; that's a finer lesson than all. Oh! oh! oh!"

This allusion to the Herberts suddenly calmed Plantagenet. He felt in an instant the injudiciousness of fostering by his conduct the latent jealousy which always lurked at the bottom of his mother's heart, and which nothing but the united talent and goodness of Lady Annabel could have hitherto baffled. So he rejoined, in a kind yet playful tone, "If you will be good, I will give you a kiss for a Christmas-box, mother, and the parrot shall go inside if you like."

"The parrot may stay at home, I do not care about it: but I cannot bear quarrelling; it is not my temper, you naughty, very naughty boy."

"My dear mother," continued his lordship, in a soothing tone, "these scenes always happen when people are going to travel. I assure you it is quite a part of packing up."

"You will be the death of me, that you will," said the mother, "with all your violence. You are worse than your father, that you are."

"Come, mother," said her son, drawing nearer, and just touching her shoulder with his hand, "will you not have my Christmas-box?"

The mother extended her cheek, which the son slightly touched with his lip, and then Mrs. Cadurcis jumped up as lively as ever, called for a glass of Mountain, and began rating the foot-boy.

At length the post-chaise was packed; they had a long journey before them, because Lord Cadurcis would go round by Southport, to call

upon a tradesman whom a month before he had commissioned to get a trinket made for him in London, according to the newest fashion, as a present for Venetia. The commission was executed; Mrs. Cadurcis, who had been consulted in confidence by her son on the subject, was charmed with the result of their united taste. She had very good-naturedly contributed one of her own few, but very fine, emeralds, to the gift; upon the back of the brooch was engraved:—

TO VENETIA, FROM HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER, PLANTAGENET.

"I hope she will be a sister, and more than a sister, to you," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

"Why?" inquired her son, rather confused.

"You may look farther, and fare worse," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

Plantagenet blushed; and yet he wondered why he blushed: he understood his mother, but he could not pursue the conversation; his heart fluttered.

A most cordial greeting awaited them at Cherbury; Dr. Masham was there, and was to remain until Monday. Mrs. Cadurcis would have opened about the present immediately, but her son warned her on the threshold that if she said a word about it, or seemed to be aware of its previous existence, even when it was shown, he would fling it instantly away into the snow; and her horror of this catastrophe bridled her tongue. Mrs. Cadurcis, however, was happy, and Lady Annabel was glad to see her so; the Doctor, too, paid her some most charming compliments; the good lady was in the highest spirits, for she was always in extremes, and at this moment she would willingly have laid down her life if she had thought the sacrifice could have contributed to the welfare of the Herberts.

Cadurcis himself drew Venetia aside, and then, holding the brooch reversed, he said, with rather a confused air, "Read that, Venetia."

"Oh! Plantagenet!" she said, very much astonished.

"You see, Venetia," he added, leaving it in her hand, "it is yours."

Venetia turned the jewel; her eye was dazzled with its brilliancy.

"It is too grand for a little girl, Plantagenet," she exclaimed, a little pale.

"No, it is not," said Plantagenet, firmly; "besides, you will not always be a little girl; and then, if ever we do not live together as we do now, you will always remember you have a brother."

"I must show it mamma; I must ask her permission to take it, Plantagenet."

Venetia went up to her mother, who was talking to Mrs. Cadurcis. She had not courage to speak before that lady and Dr. Masham, so she called her mother aside.

"Mamma," she said, "something has happened."

"What, my dear?" said Lady Annabel, somewhat surprised at the seriousness of her tone.

"Look at this, mamma!" said Venetia, giving her the brooch.

Lady Annabel looked at the jewel, and read the inscription. It was a more precious offering than the mother would willingly have sanctioned, but she was too highly bred, and too thoughtful of the feelings of others, to hesitate for a moment to admire it herself, and authorise its acceptance by her daughter. So she walked up to Cadurcis and gave him a mother's embrace for his magnificent present to his sister, placed the brooch itself near Venetia's heart, and then led her daughter to Mrs. Cadurcis, that the gratified mother might admire the testimony of her son's taste and affection. It was a most successful present, and Cadurcis felt grateful to his mother for her share in its production, and the very proper manner in which she received the announcement of its offering.

CHAPTER X.

This was Christmas-eve; the snow was falling briskly. After dinner they were glad to cluster round the large fire in the green drawing-room. Dr. Masham had promised to read the evening service in the chapel, which was now lit up, and the bell was sounding, that the cottagers might have the opportunity of attending.

Plantagenet and Venetia followed the elders to the chapel; they walked hand-in-hand down the long galleries.

"I should like to go all over this house," said Plantagenet, to his companion. "Have you ever been?"

"Never," said Venetia; "half of it is shut up. Nobody ever goes into it, except mamma."

In the night there was a violent snow-storm; not only was the fall extremely heavy, but the wind was so high, that it carried the snow off the hills, and all the roads were blocked up; in many places ten or twelve feet deep. All communication was stopped. This was an adventure that amused the children, though the rest looked rather grave. Plantagenet expressed to Venetia his wish that the snow would never melt, and that they might remain at Cherbury for ever.

The children were to have a holyday this week, and they had planned some excursions in the park and neighbourhood, but now they were all prisoners to the house. They wandered about, turning the staircase into mountains, the great hall into an ocean, and the different rooms into so many various regions. They amused themselves with their adventures, and went on endless voyages of discovery. Every moment Plantagenet longed still more for the opportunity of exploring the uninhabited chambers; but Venetia shook her head, because she was sure

Lady Annabel would not grant them permission.

"Did you ever live at any place before you came to Cherbury?" inquired Lord Cadurcis of Venetia.

"I know I was not born here," said Venetia; "but I was so young that I have no recollection of any other place."

"And did any one live here before you came?" said Plantagenet.

"I do not know," said Venetia, "I never heard if anybody did. I—I," she continued, a little constrained, "I know nothing."

"Do you remember your papa?" said Plantagenet.

"No," said Venetia.

"Then he must have died almost as soon as you were born," said Lord Cadurcis.

"I suppose he must," said Venetia, and her heart trembled.

"I wonder if he ever lived here?" said Plantagenet.

"Mamma does not like me to ask questions about my papa," said Venetia, "and I cannot tell you anything."

"Ah! your papa was different to mine, Venetia," said Lord Cadurcis; "my mother talks of him often enough. They did not agree very well; and, when we quarrel, she always says I remind her of him. I dare say Lady Annabel loved your papa very much."

"I am sure mamma did," replied Venetia.

The children returned to the drawing-room, and joined their friends: Mrs. Cadurcis was sitting on the sofa, occasionally dozing over a sermon; Dr. Masham was standing with Lady Annabel in the recess of a distant window. Her ladyship's countenance was averted; she was reading a newspaper, which the Doctor had given her. As the door opened, Lady Annabel glanced round; her countenance was agitated; she folded up the newspaper rather hastily, and gave it to the Doctor.

"And what have you been doing, little

folks?" inquired the Doctor of the new-comers.

"We have been playing at the History of Rome," said Venetia, "and, now that we have conquered every place, we do not know what to do."

"The usual result of conquest," said the Doctor, smiling. "This snow-storm is a great trial for you; I begin to believe that, after all, you would be more pleased to take your holydays at another opportunity."

"We could amuse ourselves very well," said Plantagenet, "if Lady Annabel would be so kind as to permit us to explore the part of the house that is shut up."

"That would be a strange mode of diversion," said Lady Annabel, very quietly, "and I do not think by any means a suitable one. There cannot be much amusement in roaming over a number of dusty unfurnished rooms."

"And so nicely dressed as you are too!" said

Mrs. Cadurcis, rousing herself: "I wonder how such an idea could enter your head!"

"It snows harder than ever," said Venetia; "I think, after all, I shall learn my French vocabulary."

"If it snows to-morrow," said Plantagenet, "we will do our lessons as usual. Holydays, I find, are not so amusing as I supposed."

The snow did continue, and the next day the children voluntarily suggested that they should resume their usual course of life. With their mornings occupied, they found their sources of relaxation ample; and in the evening they acted plays, and Lady Annabel dressed them up in her shawls, and Dr. Masham read Shakspeare to them.

It was about the fourth day of the visit that Plantagenet, loitering in the hall with Venetia, said to her, "I saw your mamma go into the locked-up rooms last night. I do so wish that she would let us go there."

"Last night!" said Venetia; "When could you have seen her last night?"

"Very late: the fact is, I could not sleep, and I took it into my head to walk up and down the gallery. I often do so at the abbey. I like to walk up and down an old gallery alone at night. I do not know why; but I like it very much. Everything is so still, and then you hear the owls. I cannot make out why it is; but nothing gives me more pleasure than to get up when everybody is asleep. It seems as if one were the only living person in the world. I sometimes think, when I am a man, I will always get up in the night, and go to bed in the day-time. Is not that odd?"

"But mamma!" said Venetia, "how came you to see mamma?"

"Oh! I am certain of it," said the little lord; "for, to tell you the truth, I was rather frightened at first; only I thought it would not do for a Cadurcis to be afraid, so I stood against the wall, in the shade, and

I was determined, whatever happened, not to cry out."

"Oh! you frighten me so, Plantagenet!" said Venetia.

"Ah! you might have been frightened if you had been there; past midnight, a tall white figure, and a light!—However, there is nothing to be alarmed about; it was Lady Annabel, nobody else. I saw her as clearly as I see you now. She walked along the gallery, and went to the very door you showed me the other morning. I marked the door; I could not mistake it. She unlocked it, and she went in."

"And then?" inquired Venetia, eagerly.

"Why, then, like a fool, I went back to bed," said Plantagenet. "I thought it would seem so foolish if I were caught, and I might not have had the good fortune to escape twice. I know no more."

Venetia could not reply. She heard a laugh, and then her mother's voice. They were called with a gay summons to see a colossal snow-ball,

that some of the younger servants had made and rolled to the window of the terrace-room. It was ornamented with a crown of holly and misletoe, and the parti-coloured berries looked bright in a straggling sunbeam which had fought its way through the still loaded sky, and fell upon the terrace.

In the evening, as they sat round the fire, Mrs. Cadurcis began telling Venetia a long rambling ghost story, which she declared was a real ghost story, and had happened in her own family. Such communications were not very pleasing to Lady Annabel, but she was too well bred to interrupt her guest. When, however, the narrative was finished, and Venetia, by her observations, evidently indicated the effect that it had produced upon her mind, her mother took the occasion of impressing upon her the little credibility which should be attached to such legends, and the rational process by which many unquestionable apparitions might be accounted for. Dr. Masham, following this

train, recounted a story of a ghost which had been generally received in a neighbouring village for a considerable period, and attested by the most veracious witnesses, but which was explained afterwards by turning out to be an instance of somnambulism. Venetia appeared to be extremely interested in the subject; she inquired much about sleep-walkers and sleep-walking; and a great many examples of the habit were cited. At length she said, "Mamma, did you ever walk in your sleep?"

"Not to my knowledge," said Lady Annabel, smiling; "I should hope not."

"Well, do you know," said Plantagenet, who had hitherto listened in silence, "it is very curious, but I once dreamt that you did, Lady Annabel."

"Indeed!" said the lady.

"Yes! and I dreamt it last night too," continued the little lord. "I thought I was sleeping in the uninhabited rooms here, and the door opened, and you walked in with a light."

"No! Plantagenet," said Venetia, who was seated by him, and who spoke in a whisper, "it was not—"

"Hush!" said Lord Cadurcis, in a low voice.

"Well, that was a strange dream," said Mrs. Cadurcis; "was it not, Doctor?"

"Now, children, I will tell you a very curious story," said the Doctor; "and it is quite a true one, for it happened to myself."

The Doctor was soon embarked in his tale, and his audience speedily became interested in the narrative; but Lady Annabel for some time maintained complete silence.

CHAPTER XI.

The spring returned; the intimate relations between the two families were each day more confirmed. Laby Annabel had presented her daughter and Plantagenet each with a beautiful pony, but their rides were at first to be confined to the park, and to be ever attended by a groom. In time, however, duly accompanied, they were permitted to extend their progress as far as Cadurcis. Mrs. Cadurcis had consented to the wishes of her son to restore the old garden, and Venetia was his principal adviser and assistant in the enterprise. Plantagenet was fond of the old abbey, and nothing but the agreeable society of Cherbury on the one hand,

and the relief of escaping from his mother on the other, could have induced him to pass so little of his time at home; but, with Venetia for his companion, his mornings at the abbey passed charmingly, and, as the days were now at their full length again, there was abundance of time after their studies at Cherbury to ride together through the woods to Cadurcis, spend several hours there, and for Venetia to return to the hall before sunset. Plantagenet always accompanied her to the limits of the Cherbury grounds, and then returned by himself solitary and full of fancies.

Lady Annabel had promised the children that they should some day ride together to Marringhurst, the rectory of Dr. Masham, to eat strawberries and cream. This was to be a great festival, and was looked forward to with corresponding interest. Her ladyship had kindly offered to accompany Mrs. Cadurcis in the carriage; but that lady was an invalid, and declined the journey; so Lady Annabel, who was herself

a good horsewoman, mounted her mare with Venetia and Plantagenet.

Marringhurst was only five miles from Cherbury by a cross-road, which was scarcely passable for carriages. The rectory house was a substantial, square-built, red brick mansion, shaded by gigantic elms, but the southern front covered with a famous vine, trained over it with elaborate care, and of which and his espaliers the Doctor was very proud. The garden was thickly stocked with choice fruit-trees; there was not the slightest pretence of pleasure grounds; but there was a capital bowling-green, and, above all, a grotto, where the Doctor smoked his evening pipe, and moralized in the midst of his cucumbers and cabbages. On each side extended the meadows of his glebe, where his kine ruminated at will. It was altogether a scene as devoid of the picturesque as any that could be well imagined; flat, but not low, and rich, and green, and still.

His expected guests met as warm a reception

as such a hearty friend might be expected to afford. Dr. Masham was scarcely less delighted at the excursion than the children themselves, and rejoiced in the sunny day that made everything more glad and bright. The garden, the grotto, the bowling-green, and all the novelty of the spot, greatly diverted his young companions; they visited his farm-yard, were introduced to his poultry, rambled over his meadows, and admired his cows, which he had collected with equal care and knowledge. Nor was the interior of this bachelor's residence devoid of amusement. Every nook and corner was filled with objects of interest; and everything was in the most admirable order. The goddess of neatness and precision reigned supreme, especially in his hall, which, though barely six feet square, was a cabinet of rural curiosities. His guns, his fishing tackle, a cabinet of birds stuffed by himself, a fox in a glass case that seemed absolutely running, and an otter with a real fish in its mouth, in turn delighted them;

but chiefly, perhaps, his chimney-corner of Dutch tiles, all scriptural subjects, which Venetia and Plantagenet emulated each other in discovering.

Then his library, which was rare and splendid, for the Doctor was one of the most renowned scholars in the kingdom, and his pictures, his prints, and his gold fish, and his canary birds; it seemed they never could exhaust such sources of endless amusement; to say nothing of every other room in the house, for, from the garret to the dairy, his guests encouraged him in introducing them to every thing, every person, and every place.

"And this is the way we old bachelors contrive to pass our lives," said the good Doctor; "and now, my dear Lady, Goody Blount will give us some dinner."

The Doctor's repast was a very substantial one; he seemed resolved, at one ample swoop, to repay Lady Annabel for all her hospitality; and he really took such delight in their participation of it, that his principal guest was con-

strained to check herself in more than one warning intimation that moderation was desirable, were it only for the sake of the strawberries and cream. All this time, his housekeeper, Goody Blount, as he called her, in her lace cap and ruffles, as precise and starch as an old picture, stood behind his chair with pleased solemnity, directing, with unruffled composure, the movements of the liveried bumpkin who this day was promoted to the honour of "waiting at table."

"Come," said the Doctor, as the cloth was cleared, "I must bargain for one toast, Lady Annabel: Church and State."

"What is Church and State?" said Venetia.

"As good things, Miss Venetia, as strawberries and cream," said the Doctor, laughing; "and, like them, always best united."

After their repast, the children went into the garden to amuse themselves. They strolled about some time, until Plantagenet at length took it into his head that he should like to learn to play at bowls; and he said, if Venetia would

wait in the grotto, where they then were talking, he would run back and ask the Doctor if the servant might teach him. He was not long absent; but appeared, on his return, a little agitated. Venetia inquired if he had been successful; but he shook his head, and said, he had not asked.

"Why did you not?" said Venetia.

"I did not like," he replied, looking very serious; "something happened."

"What could have happened?" said Venetia.

"Something strange," was his answer.

"Oh, do tell me, Plantagenet!"

"Why," said he, in a low voice, "your mamma is crying."

"Crying!" exclaimed Venetia; "my dear mamma crying! I must go to her directly."

"Hush!" said Plantagenet, shaking his head, "you must not go."

"I must."

"No, you must not go, Venetia," was his

reply; "I am sure she does not want us to know she is crying."

"What did she say to you?"

"She did not see me; the Doctor did, and he gave me a nod to go away."

"I never saw mamma cry," said Venetia.

"Don't you say anything about it, Venetia," said Plantagenet, with a very manly air. "Listen to what I say."

"I do, Plantagenet, always; but still I should like to know what mamma can be crying about. Do tell me all about it."

"Why, I came to the room by the open windows, and your mamma was standing up, with her back to me, and leaning on the mantelpiece, with her face in her handkerchief; and the Doctor was standing up too, only his back was to the fireplace; and when he saw me, he made me a sign to go away, and I went directly."

"Are you sure mamma was crying?"

"I heard her sob."

"I think I shall cry," said Venetia.

"You must not; you must know nothing about it. If you let your mamma know that I saw her crying, I shall never tell you anything again."

"What do you think she was crying about, Plantagenet?"

"I cannot say; perhaps she had been talking about your papa. I do not want to play at bowls now," added Plantagenet. "Let us go and see the cows."

In the course of half an hour the servant summoned the children to the house. The horses were ready, and they were now to return. Lady Annabel received them with her usual cheerfulness.

"Well, dear children," she said, "have you been very much amused?"

Venetia ran forward, and embraced her mother with even unusual fondness. She was mindful of Plantagenet's injunctions, and was resolved not to revive her mother's grief by any allusion

that could recall the past; but her heart was, nevertheless, full of sympathy, and she could not have rode home, had she not thus expressed her love for her mother.

With the exception of this strange incident, over which, afterwards, Venetia often pondered, and which made her rather serious the whole of the ride home, this expedition to Marringhurst was a very happy day.

CHAPTER XII.

This happy summer was succeeded by a singularly wet autumn. Weeks of continuous rain rendered it difficult even for the little Cadurcis, who defied the elements, to be as constant as heretofore in his daily visits to Cherbury. His mother, too, grew daily a greater invalid, and, with increasing sufferings and infirmities, the natural captiousness of her temper proportionably exhibited itself. She insisted upon the companionship of her son, and that he should not leave the house in such unseasonable weather. If he resisted, she fell into one of her jealous rages, and taunted him with loving strangers better than his own mother. Cadurcis, on the

whole, behaved very well; he thought of Lady Annabel's injunctions, and restrained his passion. Yet he was not repaid for the sacrifice; his mother made no effort to render their joint society agreeable, or even endurable. She was rarely in an amiable mood, and generally either irritable or sullen. If the weather held up a little, and he ventured to pay a visit to Cherbury, he was sure to be welcomed back with a fit of passion; either Mrs. Cadurcis was angered for being left alone, or had fermented herself into fury by the certainty of his catching a fever. If Plantagenet remained at the abbey, she was generally sullen; and, as he himself was naturally silent under any circumstances, his mother would indulge in that charming monologue, so conducive to domestic serenity, termed "talking at a person," and was continually insinuating that she supposed he found it very dull to pass his day with her, and that she dared say that somebody could be lively enough if he were somewhere else.

Cadurcis would turn pale, and bite his lip, and then leave the room; and whole days would sometimes pass with barely a monosyllable being exchanged between this parent and child. Cadurcis had found some opportunities of pouring forth his griefs and mortification into the ear of Venetia, and they had reached her mother; but Lady Annabel, though she sympathised with this interesting boy, invariably counselled duty. The morning studies were abandoned, but a quantity of books were sent over from Cherbury for Plantagenet, and Lady Annabel seized every opportunity of conciliating Mrs. Cadurcis' temper in favour of her child, by the attention which she paid the mother. The weather, however, prevented either herself or Venetia from visiting the abbey; and, on the whole, the communications between the two establishments and their inmates had become very rare.

Though now a continual inmate of the abbey, Cadurcis was seldom the companion of his mother. They met at their meals, and that

was all. He entered the room every day with an intention of conciliating; but the mutual tempers of the mother and the son were so quick and sensitive, that he always failed in his purpose, and could only avoid a storm by dogged silence. This enraged Mrs. Cadurcis more even than his impertinence; she had no conduct; she lost all command over herself, and did not hesitate to address to her child terms of reproach and abuse, which a vulgar mind could only conceive and a coarse tongue alone express. What a contrast to Cherbury, to the mild maternal elegance and provident kindness of Lady Annabel, and the sweet tones of Venetia's ever-sympathising voice! Cadurcis, though so very young, was gifted with an innate fastidiousness, that made him shrink from a rude woman. His feelings were different in regard to men; he sympathised at a very early age with the bold and the energetic; his favourites among the peasantry were ever those who excelled in athletic sports; and, though he never expressed

the opinion, he did not look upon the poacher with the evil eye of his class. But a coarse and violent woman jarred even his young nerves; and this woman was his mother, his only parent, almost his only relation; for he had no near relative, except a cousin whom he had never even seen, the pennyless orphan of a pennyless brother of his father, and who had been sent to sea at a very early age; so that, after all, his mother was the only natural friend he had. This poor little boy would fly from that mother with a sullen brow, or, perhaps, even with a harsh and cutting repartee; and then he would lock himself up in his room and weep. But he allowed no witnesses of this weakness. The lad was very proud. If any of the household passed by as he quitted the saloon, and stared for a moment at his pale and agitated face, he would coin a smile for the instant, and say even a kind word, for he was very courteous to his inferiors, and all the servants loved him; and then take refuge in his solitary woe.

Relieved by this indulgence of his mortified heart, Cadurcis looked about him for resources. The rain was pouring in torrents, and the plash of the troubled and swollen lake might be heard even at the abbey. At night the rising gusts of wind, for the nights were always clear and stormy, echoed down the cloisters with a wild moan to which he loved to listen. In the morning he beheld with interest the savage spoils of the tempest; mighty branches of trees strewn about, and sometimes a vast trunk uprooted from its ancient settlement. Irresistibly the conviction impressed itself upon his mind, that, if he were alone in this old abbey, with no mother to break that strange fountain of fancies that seemed always to bubble up in his solitude, he might be happy. He wanted no companions; he loved to be alone, to listen to the winds, and gaze upon the trees and waters, and wander in those dim cloisters and that gloomy gallery.

From the first hour of his arrival he had loved the venerable hall of his fathers. Its

appearance harmonised with all the associations of his race. Power and pomp, ancestral fame, the legendary respect of ages, all that was great, exciting, and heroic, all that was marked out from the common-place current of human events, hovered round him. In the halls of Cadurcis he was the Cadurcis; though a child, he was keenly sensible of his high race: his whole being sympathised with their glory; he was capable of dying sooner than of disgracing them; and then came the memory of his mother's sharp voice and harsh vulgar words, and he shivered with disgust.

Forced into solitude, forced to feed upon his own mind, Cadurcis found in that solitude each day a dearer charm, and in that mind a richer treasure of interest and curiosity. He loved to wander about, dream of the past, and conjure up a future as glorious. What was he to be?—What should be his career?—Whither should he wend his course? Even at this early age, dreams of far lands flitted over his mind, and

schemes of fantastic and adventurous life. But now he was a boy—a wretched boy—controlled by a vulgar and narrow-minded woman! And this servitude must last for years; yes! years must elapse before he was his own master. Oh! if he could only pass them alone, without a human voice to disturb his musings, a single form to distract his vision!

Under the influence of such feelings, even Cherbury figured to his fancy in somewhat faded colours. There indeed he was loved and cherished; there indeed no sound was ever heard, no sight ever seen, that could annoy or mortify the high pitch of his unconscious ideal; but still, even at Cherbury, he was a child. Under the influence of daily intercourse, his tender heart had balanced, perhaps even outweighed, his fiery imagination. That constant yet delicate affection had softened all his soul: he had no time but to be grateful and to love. He returned home only to muse over their sweet society, and contrast their refined and gentle

life with the harsh rude hearth that awaited him. Whatever might be his reception at home, he was thrown back for solace on their memory, not upon his own heart; and he felt the delightful conviction that to-morrow would renew the spell whose enchantment had enabled him to endure the present vexation. But now the magic of that intercourse had ceased; after a few days of restlessness and repining, he discovered that he must find in his desolation sterner sources of support than the memory of Venetia, and the recollections of the domestic joys of Cherbury. It was astonishing with what rapidity the character of Cadurcis developed itself in solitude; and strange was the contrast between the gentle child who, a few weeks before, had looked forward with so much interest to accompanying Venetia to a childish festival, and the stern and moody being who paced the solitary cloisters of Cadurcis, and then would withdraw to his lonely chamber and the amusement of a book. He was at this time deeply

interested in Purchas's Pilgrimage, one of the few books of which the late lord had not despoiled him. Narratives of travels and voyages always particularly pleased him; he had an idea that he was laying up information which might be useful to him hereafter; the Cherbury collection was rich in this class of volumes, and Lady Annabel encouraged their perusal.

In this way many weeks elapsed at the abbey, during which the visits of Plantagenet to Cherbury were very few. Sometimes, if the weather cleared for an hour during the morning, he would mount his pony, and gallop without stopping to the hall. The rapidity of the motion excited his mind; he fancied himself, as he embraced Venetia, some chieftain who had escaped for a moment from his castle to visit his mistress; his imagination conjured up a war between the opposing towers of Cadurcis and Cherbury; and when his mother fell into a passion on his return, it passed with him only, according to its length and spirit, as a brisk skirmish or a general engagement.

CHAPTER XIII.

One afternoon, on his return from Cherbury, Plantagenet found the fire extinguished in the little room which he had appropriated to himself, and where he kept his books. As he had expressed his wish to the servant that the fire should be kept up, he complained to him of the neglect, but was informed, in reply, that the fire had been allowed to go out by his mother's orders, and that she desired in future that he would always read in the saloon. Plantagenet had sufficient self-control to make no observation before the servant, and soon after joined his mother, who looked very sullen, as if she were conscious that she had laid a train for an explosion.

Dinner was now served, a short and silent meal. Lord Cadurcis did not choose to speak because he felt aggrieved, and his mother because she was husbanding her energies for the contest which she believed impending. At length, when the table was cleared, and the servant departed, Lord Cadurcis said, in a very quiet tone, "I think I shall write to my guardian to-morrow about my going to Eton."

"You shall do no such thing," said Mrs. Cadurcis, bristling up, "I never heard such a ridiculous idea in my life as a boy like you writing letters on such subjects to a person you have never even seen. When I think it proper that you should go to Eton I shall write."

"I wish you would think it proper now then, ma'am."

"I won't be dictated to," said Mrs. Cadurcis, fiercely.

"I was not dictating," replied her son, calmly.

"You would if you could," said his mother.

"Time enough to find fault with me when I do, ma'am."

"There is enough to find fault about at all times, sir."

"On which side, Mrs. Cadurcis?" inquired Plantagenet, with a sneer.

"Don't aggravate me, Lord Cadurcis," said his mother.

"How am I aggravating you, ma'am?"

"I won't be answered," said the mother.

"I prefer silence myself," said the son.

"I won't be insulted in my own room, sir," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

"I am not insulting you, Mrs. Cadurcis," said Plantagenet, rather fiercely; "and as for your own room, I never wish to enter it. Indeed I should not be here at this moment, had you not ordered my fire to be put out, and particularly requested that I should sit in the saloon."

"Oh! you are a vastly obedient person, I dare say," replied Mrs. Cadurcis, very pettishly.

"How long, I should like to know, have my requests received such particular attention? Pooh!"

"Well, then, I will order my fire to be lighted again," said Plantagenet.

"You shall do no such thing," said the mother; "I am mistress in this house. No one shall give orders here but me, and you may write to your guardian and tell him that if you like."

"I shall certainly not write to my guardian for the first time," said Lord Cadurcis, "about any such nonsense."

"Nonsense, sir! Nonsense you said, did you? Your mother nonsense! This is the way to treat a parent, is it? I am nonsense, am I? I will teach you what nonsense is. Nonsense shall be very good sense; you shall find that, sir, that you shall. Nonsense, indeed! I'll write to your guardian, that I will! You call your mother nonsense, do you? And where did you learn that, I should like to know?

Nonsense, indeed! This comes of your going to Cherbury! So your mother is nonsense; a pretty lesson for Lady Annabel to teach you. Oh! I'll speak my mind to her, that I will."

"What has Lady Annabel to do with it?" inquired Lord Cadurcis in a loud tone.

"Don't threaten me, sir," said Mrs. Cadurcis, with violent gesture, "I won't be menaced; I won't be menaced by my son. Pretty goings on, indeed! But I will put a stop to them; will I not? that is all. Nonsense, indeed; your mother nonsense!"

"Well you do talk nonsense, and the greatest," said Plantagenet, doggedly; "you are talking nonsense now, you are always talking nonsense, and you never open your mouth about Lady Annabel without talking nonsense."

"If I was not very ill I would give it you," said his mother, grinding her teeth. "O! you brat! You wicked brat you! Is this the way to address me? I have half a mind to shake your viciousness out of you, that I have!

You are worse than your father, that you are!" —and here she wept with rage.

"I dare say my father was not so bad, after all!" said Lord Cadurcis.

"What should you know about your father, sir?" said Mrs. Cadurcis. "How dare you speak about your father!"

"Who should speak about a father but a son?"

"Hold your impudence, sir!"

"I am not impudent, ma'am."

"You aggravating brat!" exclaimed the enraged woman, "I wish I had something to throw at you!"

"Did you throw things at my father?" asked his lordship.

Mrs. Cadurcis went into an hysterical rage; then, suddenly jumping up, she rushed at her son. Lord Cadurcis took up a position behind the table, but the sportive and mocking air which he generally instinctively assumed on these occasions, and which, while it irritated his

mother more, was in reality affected by the boy from a sort of nervous desire of preventing these dreadful exposures from assuming a too tragic tone, did not characterise his countenance on the present occasion; on the contrary, it was pale, but composed and very serious. Mrs. Cadurcis, after one or two ineffectual attempts to catch him, paused and panted for breath. He took advantage of this momentary cessation, and spoke thus—"Mother, I am in no humour for frolics. I moved out of your way that you might not strike me, because I have made up my mind that, if you ever strike me again, I will live with you no longer. Now I have given you warning; do what you please; I shall sit down in this chair, and not move. If you strike me, you know the consequences." So saying, his lordship resumed his chair.

Mrs. Cadurcis simultaneously sprang forward and boxed his ears; and then her son rose without the slightest expression of any kind, and slowly quitted the chamber.

Mrs. Cadurcis remained alone in a savage sulk: hours passed away, and her son never made his appearance. Then she rang the bell, and ordered the servant to tell Lord Cadurcis that tea was ready; but the servant returned, and reported that his lordship had locked himself up in his room, and would not reply to his inquiries. Determined not to give in, Mrs. Cadurcis, at length, retired for the night, rather regretting her violence, but still sullen. Having well scolded her waiting-woman, she, at length, fell asleep.

The morning brought breakfast, but no Lord Cadurcis; in vain were all the messages of his mother, her son would make no reply to them. Mrs. Cadurcis, at length, personally repaired to his room and knocked at the door, but she was as unsuccessful as the servants; she began to think he would starve, and desired the servant to offer from himself to bring his meal. Still silence. Indignant at his treatment of these overtures of conciliation, Mrs. Cadurcis returned to the

saloon, confident that hunger, if no other impulse, would bring her wild cub out of his lair; but, just before dinner, her waiting-woman came running into the room.

"Oh, ma'am, ma'am, I don't know where Lord Cadurcis has gone; but I have just seen John, and he says there was no pony in the stable this morning."

Mrs. Cadurcis sprang up, rushed to her son's chamber, found the door still locked, ordered it to be burst open, and then it turned out that his lordship had never been there at all, for the bed was unused. Mrs. Cadurcis was frightened out of her life; the servants, to console her, assured her that Plantagenet must be at Cherbury; and while she believed their representations, which were probable, she became not only more composed, but resumed her jealousy and sullenness. Gone to Cherbury, indeed! No doubt of it! Let him remain at Cherbury. Execrating Lady Annabel, she flung herself into her easy chair,

and dined alone, preparing herself to speak her mind on her son's return.

The night, however, did not bring him, and Mrs. Cadurcis began to recur to her alarm. Much as she now disliked Lady Annabel, she could not resist the conviction that her ladyship would not permit Plantagenet to remain at Cherbury. Nevertheless, jealous, passionate, and obstinate, she stifled her fears, vented her spleen on her unhappy domestics, and, finally, exhausting herself by a storm of passion about some very unimportant subject, again sought refuge in sleep.

She awoke early in a fright, and inquired immediately for her son. He had not been seen. She ordered the abbey bell to be sounded, sent messengers throughout the demesne, and directed all the offices to be searched. At first she thought he must have returned, and slept, perhaps, in a barn; then she adopted the more probable conclusion, that he had drowned him-

self in the lake. Then she went into hysterics; called Plantagenet her lost darling; declared he was the best and most dutiful of sons, and the image of his poor father,—then abused all the servants, and then abused herself.

About noon she grew quite distracted, and rushed about the house with her hair dishevelled, and in a dressing-gown—looked in all the closets, behind the screens, under the chairs, into her work-box—but, strange to say, with no success. Then she went off into a swoon, and her servants, alike frightened about master and mistress, mother and son, despatched a messenger immediately to Cherbury for intelligence, advice, and assistance. In less than an hour's time the messenger returned, and informed them that Lord Cadurcis had not been at Cherbury since two days back, but that Lady Annabel was very sorry to hear that their mistress was so ill, and would come on to see her immediately. In the mean time Lady Annabel added, that she had sent to Dr. Masham, and had great hopes that Lord

Cadurcis was at Marringhurst. Mrs. Cadurcis, who had now come to, as her waiting-woman described the returning consciousness of her mistress, eagerly embraced the hope held out of Plantagenet being at Marringhurst, poured forth a thousand expressions of gratitude, admiration, and affection for Lady Annabel, who, she declared, was her best, her only friend, and the being in the world whom she loved most, next to her unhappy and injured child.

After another hour of suspense Lady Annabel arrived, and her entrance was the signal for a renewed burst of hysterics from Mrs. Cadurcis, so wild and terrible, that they must have been contagious to any female of less disciplined emotions than her guest.

CHAPTER XIV.

Towards the evening, Dr. Masham arrived at Cadurcis. He could give no intelligence of Plantagenet, who had not called at Marringhurst; but he offered, and was prepared, to undertake his pursuit. The good Doctor had his saddle-bags well stocked, and was now on his way to Southport, that being the nearest town, and where he doubted not to gain some tidings of the fugitive. Mrs. Cadurcis he found so indisposed, that he anticipated the charitable intentions of Lady Annabel not to quit her; and, after having bid them place their confidence in Providence and his humble exertions, he at once departed on his researches.

In the mean time let us return to the little lord himself. Having secured the advantage of a long start, by the device of turning the key of his chamber, he repaired to the stables, and, finding no one to observe him, saddled his pony and galloped away, without plan or purpose. An instinctive love of novelty and adventure induced him to direct his course by a road which he had never before pursued ; and, after two or three miles' progress through a wild open country of brushwood, he found that he had entered that considerable forest which formed the boundary of many of the views from Cadurcis. The afternoon was clear and still, the sun shining in the light blue sky, and the wind altogether hushed. On each side of the winding road spread the bright green turf, occasionally shaded by picturesque groups of doddered oaks. The calm beauty of the sylvan scene wonderfully touched the fancy of the youthful fugitive; it soothed and gratified him. He pulled up his pony; patted its lively neck, as if in gratitude

for its good service, and, confident that he could not be successfully pursued, indulged in a thousand dreams of Robin Hood and his merry men. As for his own position and prospects, he gave himself no anxiety about them; satisfied with his escape from a revolting thraldom, his mind seemed to take a bound from the difficulty of his situation and the wildness of the scene, and he felt himself a man, and one, too, whom nothing could daunt or appal.

Soon the road itself quite disappeared and vanished in a complete turfy track; but the continuing marks of cart-wheels assured him that it was a thoroughfare, although he was now indeed journeying in the heart of a forest of oaks, and he doubted not it would lead to some town or village, or at any rate to some farm-house. Towards sunset he determined to make use of the remaining light, and pushed on apace; but it soon grew so dark, that he found it necessary to resume his walking pace, from fear of the overhanging branches and the

trunks of felled trees which occasionally crossed his way.

Notwithstanding the very probable prospect of passing his night in the forest, our little adventurer did not lose heart. Cadurcis was a very intrepid child, and, when in the company of those with whom he was not familiar, and free from those puerile associations to which those who had known and lived with him long were necessarily subject, he would assume a staid and firm demeanour very unusual with one of such tender years. A light in the distance was now not only a signal that the shelter he desired was at hand, but reminded him that it was necessary by his assured port to prove that he was not unused to travel alone, and that he was perfectly competent and qualified to be his own master.

As he drew nearer the lights multiplied, and the moon, which now rose over the forest, showed to him that the trees, retiring on both sides to some little distance, left a circular plot of ground, on which were not only the lights which had at first

attracted his attention, but the red flames of a watch-fire, round which some dark figures had hitherto been clustered. The sound of horses' feet had disturbed them, and the fire was now more and more visible. As Cadurcis approached, he observed some low tents, and in a few minutes he was in the centre of an encampment of gipsies. He was for a moment somewhat dismayed, for he had been brought up with the usual terror of these wild people; nevertheless, he was not unequal to the occasion. He was surrounded in an instant, but only with women and children; for the gipsy-men never immediately appear. They smiled with their bright eyes, and the flames of the watch-fire threw a lurid glow over their dark and flushing countenances; they held out their practised hands; they uttered unintelligible, but not unfriendly sounds. The heart of Cadurcis faltered, but his voice did not betray him.

"I am cold, good people," said the undaunted boy; "will you let me warm myself by your fire?"

A beautiful girl, with significant gestures, pressed her hand to her heart, then pointed in the direction of the tents, and then rushed away, soon reappearing with a male. He was a short thin man, inclining to middle age, but of a compact and apparently powerful frame, lithe, supple, and sinewy. His complexion was dark, but clear; his eye large, liquid, and black; but his other features small, though precisely moulded. He wore a green jacket and a pair of black velvet breeches, his legs and feet being bare, with the exception of slippers. Round his head was twisted a red handkerchief, which, perhaps, might not have looked like a turban on a countenance less oriental.

"What would the young master?" inquired the gipsy-man, in a voice far from disagreeable, and with a gesture of courtesy; but, at the same time, he shot a scrutinising glance first at Plantagenet, and then at his pony.

"I would remain with you," said Lord Cadurcis; "that is, if you will let me."

The gipsy-man made a sign to the women, and

Plantagenet was lifted by them off his pony, before he could be aware of their purpose; the children led the pony away, and the gipsy-man conducted Plantagenet to the fire, where an old woman sat, presiding over the mysteries of an enormous flesh-pot. Immediately his fellows, who had originally been clustered around it, re-appeared; fresh blocks and branches were thrown on, the flames crackled and rose, the men seated themselves around, and Plantagenet, excited by the adventure, rubbed his hands before the fire, and determined to fear nothing.

A savoury steam exuded from the flesh-pot.

"That smells well," said Plantagenet.

"'Tis a dimber cove," whispered one of the younger men to a companion *.

"Our supper has but rough seasoning for such as you," said the man who had first saluted him, and who was apparently the leader, "but the welcome is hearty."

The woman and girls now came with wooden bowls and platters, and, after serving the men,

* 'Tis a lively lad.

seated themselves in an exterior circle, the children playing round them.

"Come, old mort," said the leader, in a very different tone to the one in which he addressed his young guest, "tout the cobble-colter; are we to have darkmans upon us? And, Beruna, flick the panam *."

Upon this, that beautiful girl, who had at first attracted the notice of Cadurcis, called out, in a sweet lively voice, "Ay! ay! Morgana!" and in a moment handed over the heads of the women a pannier of bread, which the leader took, and offered its contents to our fugitive. Cadurcis helped himself, with a bold but gracious air. The pannier was then passed round, and the old woman, opening the pot, drew out with a huge iron fork a fine turkey, which she tossed into a large wooden platter, and cut up with great quickness. First she helped Morgana, but only gained a reproof for her pains, who immediately yielded his portion to Plantagenet. Each man

* Come, old woman; look after the turkey. Are we to wait till night? And, Beruna, cut the bread.

was provided with his knife, but the guest had none. Morgana immediately gave up his own.

"Beruna!" he shouted, "gibel a chiv for the gentry cove*."

"Ay! ay! Morgana," said the girl, and she brought the knife to Plantagenet himself, saying at the same time, with sparkling eyes, "Yam, yam, gentry cove†."

Cadurcis really thought it was the most delightful meal he had ever made in his life. The flesh-pot held something besides turkeys. Rough as was the fare, it was good and plentiful. As for beverage, they drank humpty-dumpty, which is ale boiled with brandy, and which is not one of the slightest charms of a gipsy's life. When the men were satisfied, their platters were filled, and given to the women and children; and Beruna, with her portion, came and seated herself by Plantagenet, looking at him with a blended glance of delight and astonishment, like a beautiful young savage, and then turning to her

* Bring a knife for the gentleman.
† Eat, eat, gentleman.

female companions to stifle a laugh. The flesh-pot was carried away, the men lit their pipes, the fire was replenished, its red shadow mingled with the silver beams of the moon; around were the glittering tents and the silent woods,—on all sides flashing eyes and picturesque forms. Cadurcis glanced at his companions, and gazed upon the scene with feelings of ravishing excitement; and then, almost unconscious of what he was saying, he exclaimed—"At length I have found the life that suits me!"

"Indeed! Squire," said Morgana. "Would you be one of us?"

"From this moment," said Cadurcis, "if you will admit me to your band. But what can I do? And I have nothing to give you. You must teach me to earn my right to our supper."

"We'll make a Turkey merchant* of you yet," said an old gipsy, "never fear that."

"Bah! Peter," said Morgana with an angry

* *I. E.* We will teach you to steal a turkey.

look, "your red rag will never lie still. And what was the purpose of your present travel?" he continued to Plantagenet.

"None; I was sick of silly home."

"The gentry cove will be romboyled by his dam," said a third gipsy; "Queer Cuffin will be the word yet, if we don't tout*."

"Well, you shall see a little more of us before you decide," said Morgana thoughtfully, and turning the conversation. "Beruna!"

"Ay! ay! Morgana!"

"Tip me the clank, like a dimker mort as you are; trim a ken for the gentry cove; he is no lanspresado, or I am a kinchin†."

"Ay! ay! Morgana," gaily exclaimed the girl, and she ran off to prepare a bed for the Lord of Cadurcis.

* His mother will make a hue-and-cry after the gentleman yet: justice of the peace will be the word, if we don't look sharp.

† Give me the tankard, like a pretty girl. Get a bed ready for the gentleman. He is no informer, or I am an infant.

CHAPTER XV.

Dr. Masham could gain no tidings of the object of his pursuit at Southport: here, however, he ascertained that Plantagenet could not have fled to London, for in those days public conveyances were rare. There was only one coach that ran, or rather jogged, along this road, and it went but once a week, it being expected that very night; while the innkeeper was confident that, as far as Southport was concerned, his little lordship had not sought refuge in the waggon, which was more frequent, though somewhat slower, in its progress to the metropolis. Unwilling to return home, although the evening was now drawing in, the Doctor resolved to pro-

ceed to a considerable town about twelve miles further, which Cadurcis might have reached by a cross road; so drawing his cloak around him, looking to his pistols, and desiring his servant to follow his example, the stout-hearted Rector of Marringhurst pursued his way.

It was dark when the Doctor entered the town, and he proceeded immediately to the inn where the coach was expected, with some faint hope that the fugitive might be discovered abiding within its walls; but, to all his inquiries about young gentlemen and ponies, he received very unsatisfactory answers; so, reconciling himself as well as he could to the disagreeable posture of affairs, he settled himself in the parlour of the inn, with a good fire, and, lighting his pipe, desired his servant to keep a sharp look-out.

In due time a great uproar in the inn-yard announced the arrival of the stage,—an unwieldy machine, carrying six inside, and dragged by as many horses. The Doctor, opening the door of

his apartment,—which led on to a gallery that ran round the inn-yard,—leaned over the balustrade with his pipe in his mouth, and watched proceedings. It so happened that the stage was to discharge one of its passengers at this town, who had come from the north, and the Doctor recognised in him a neighbour and brother magistrate, one Squire Mountmeadow, a very important personage in his way, the terror of poachers, and somewhat of an oracle on the bench, as it was said that he could even take a deposition without the assistance of his clerk. Although, in spite of the ostler's lanterns, it was very dark, it was impossible ever to be unaware of the arrival of Squire Mountmeadow; for he was one of those great men who take care to remind the world of their dignity by the attention which they require on every occasion.

"Coachman!" said the authoritative voice of the Squire; "Where is the coachman? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Postilion! Where is the postilion? Oh! you are there, Sir, are

you? Host! Where is the host? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Waiter! Where is the waiter? I say where is the waiter?"

"Coming, please your worship!"

"How long am I to wait? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Coachman!"

"Your worship!"

"Postilion!"

"Yes, your worship!"

"Host!"

"Your worship's servant!"

"Waiter!"

"Your worship's honour's humble servant!"

"I am going to alight."

All four attendants immediately bowed, and extended their arms to assist this very great man; but Squire Mountmeadow, scarcely deigning to avail himself of their proffered assistance, and pausing on each step, looking around him with his long, lean, solemn visage, finally reached terra firma in safety, and slowly stretched his tall, ungainly figure. It was at this moment

that Doctor Masham's servant approached him, and informed his worship that his master was at the inn, and would be happy to see him. The countenance of the great Mountmeadow relaxed at the mention of the name of a brother magistrate, and in an audible voice he bade the groom "tell my worthy friend, his worship, your worthy master, that I shall be rejoiced to pay my respects to an esteemed neighbour and a brother magistrate."

With slow and solemn steps, preceded by the host, and followed by the waiter, Squire Mountmeadow ascended the staircase of the external gallery, pausing occasionally, and looking around him with thoughtful importance, and making an occasional inquiry as to the state of the town and neighbourhood during his absence, in this fashion:—"Stop, where are you, host? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Well, Mr. Host, and how have we been?—orderly, eh?"

"Quite orderly, your worship."

"Hoh! Orderly! Hem! Well, very well!

Never easy, if absent only four-and-twenty hours. The law must be obeyed."

"Yes, your worship."

"Lead on, Sir. And, waiter; where are you, waiter? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? And so my brother magistrate is here?"

"Yes, your honour's worship."

"Hem! What can he want?—something in the wind; wants my advice, I dare say; shall have it. Soldiers ruly; king's servants; must be obeyed."

"Yes, your worship; quite ruly, your worship," said the host.

"As obliging and obstreporous as can be," said the waiter.

"Well, very well," and here the Squire had gained the gallery, where the Doctor was ready to receive him.

"It always gives me pleasure to meet a brother magistrate," said Squire Mountmeadow, bowing with cordial condescension; "and a gentleman of your cloth, too. The clergy must be

respected; I stand or fall by the Church. After you, Doctor,—after you." So saying, the two magistrates entered the room.

"An unexpected pleasure, Doctor," said the Squire; "and what brings your worship to town?"

"A somewhat strange business," said the Doctor; "and indeed I am not a little glad to have the advantage of your advice and assistance."

"Hem! I thought so," said the Squire; "your worship is very complimentary. What is the case?—larceny?"

"Nay, my good Sir, 'tis a singular affair; and, if you please, we will order supper first, and discuss it afterwards. 'Tis for your private ear."

"Oh! ho!" said the Squire, looking very mysterious and important. "With your worship's permission," he added, filling a pipe.

The host was no laggard in waiting on two such important guests. The brother magistrates despatched their rump-steak; the foaming tankard was replenished; the fire renovated. At

length, the table and the room being alike clear, Squire Mountmeadow drew a long puff, and said, "Now for business, Doctor."

His companion then informed him of the exact object of his visit, and narrated to him as much of the preceding incidents as was necessary. The Squire listened in solemn silence, elevating his eyebrows, nodding his head, trimming his pipe, with profound interjections; and finally, being appealed to for his opinion by the Doctor, delivered himself of a most portentous "Hem!"

"I question, Doctor," said the Squire, "whether we should not communicate with the Secretary of State. 'Tis no ordinary business. 'Tis a spiriting away of a Peer of the realm. It smacks of treason."

"Egad!" said the Doctor, suppressing a smile, "I think we can hardly make a truant boy a Cabinet question."

The Squire glanced a look of pity at his companion. "Prove the truancy, Doctor; prove it. 'Tis a case of disappearance; and how do

we know that there is not a Jesuit at the bottom of it?"

"There is something in that," said the Doctor.

"There is everything in it," said the Squire, triumphantly. "We must offer rewards; we must raise the posse comitatus."

"For the sake of the family, I would make as little stir as necessary," said Dr. Masham.

"For the sake of the family!" said the Squire. "Think of the nation, Sir! For the sake of the nation we must make as much stir as possible. 'Tis a Secretary of State's business; 'tis a case for a general warrant."

"He is a well-meaning lad enough," said the Doctor.

"Ay, and therefore more easily played upon," said the Squire. "Rome is at the bottom of it, brother Masham, and I am surprised that a good Protestant like yourself—one of the King's Justices of the Peace, and a Doctor of Divinity to boot—should doubt the fact for an instant."

"We have not heard much of the Jesuits of late years," said the Doctor.

"The very reason that they are more active," said the Squire.

"An only child!" said Dr. Masham.

"A Peer of the realm!" said Squire Mountmeadow.

"I should think he must be in the neighbourhood."

"More likely at St. Omer's."

"They would scarcely take him to the plantations with this war?"

"Let us drink 'Confusion to the rebels!'" said the Squire. "Any news?"

"Howe sails this week," said the Doctor.

"May he burn Boston!" said the Squire.

"I would rather he would reduce it, without such extremities," said Dr. Masham.

"Nothing is to be done without extremities," said Squire Mountmeadow.

"But this poor child?" said the Doctor,

leading back the conversation. "What can we do?"

"The law of the case is clear," said the Squire; "we must move a habeas corpus."

"But shall we be nearer getting him for that?" inquired the Doctor.

"Perhaps not, Sir; but 'tis the regular way. We must proceed by rule."

"I am sadly distressed," said Dr. Masham. "The worst is, he has gained such a start upon us; and yet he can hardly have gone to London;—he would have been recognised here or at Southport."

"With his hair cropped, and in a Jesuit's cap?" inquired the Squire, with a slight sneer. "Ah! Doctor, Doctor, you know not the gentry you have to deal with!"

"We must hope," said Dr. Masham. "To-morrow we must organise some general search."

"I fear it will be of no use," said the Squire, replenishing his pipe. "These Jesuits are deep fellows."

"But we are not sure about the Jesuits, Squire."

"I am," said the Squire; "the case is clear, and the sooner you break it to his mother the better. You asked me for my advice, and I give it you."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was on the following morning, as the Doctor was under the operation of the barber, that his groom ran into the room with a pale face and agitated air, and exclaimed,

"Oh! master, master, what do you think? here is a man in the yard with my lord's pony."

"Stop him, Peter," exclaimed the Doctor; "No! watch him—watch him—send for a constable. Are you certain 'tis the pony?"

"I could swear to it out of a thousand," said Peter.

"There, never mind my beard, my good man," said the Doctor. "There is no time for

appearances. Here is a robbery, at least; God grant no worse. Peter, my boots!" So saying, the Doctor, half equipped, and followed by Peter and the barber, went forth on the gallery. "Where is he?" said the Doctor.

"He is down below, talking to the ostler, and trying to sell the pony," said Peter.

"There is no time to lose," said the Doctor; "follow me, like true men," and the Doctor ran down stairs in his silk nightcap, for his wig was not yet prepared.

"There he is," said Peter; and true enough there was a man in a smock frock, and mounted on the very pony which Lady Annabel had presented to Plantagenet.

"Seize this man in the King's name," said the Doctor, hastily advancing to him. "Ostler, do your duty; Peter, be firm. I charge you all; I am a justice of the peace. I charge you arrest this man."

The man seemed very much astonished; but he was composed, and offered no resistance. He

was dressed like a small farmer, in top boots and a smock frock. His hat was rather jauntily placed on his curly red hair.

"Why am I seized?" at length said the man.

"Where did you get that pony?" said the Doctor.

"I bought it" was the reply.

"Of whom?"

"A stranger at market."

"You are accused of robbery, and suspected of murder," said Dr. Masham. "Mr. Constable," said the Doctor, turning to that functionary, who had now arrived, "handcuff this man, and keep him in strict custody until further orders."

The report that a man was arrested for robbery, and suspected of murder, at the Red Dragon, spread like wildfire through the town; and the inn-yard was soon crowded with the curious and excited inhabitants.

Peter and the barber, to whom he had com-

municated everything, were well qualified to do justice to the important information of which they were the sole depositaries; the tale lost nothing by their telling; and a circumstantial narrative of the robbery and murder of no less a personage than Lord Cadurcis, of Cadurcis Abbey, was soon generally prevalent.

The stranger was secured in a stable, before which the constable kept guard; mine host, and the waiter, and the ostlers, acted as a sort of supernumerary police, to repress the multitude; while Peter held the real pony by the bridle, whose identity, which he frequently attested, was considered by all present as an incontrovertible evidence of the commitment of the crime.

In the mean time Dr. Masham, really very agitated, roused his brother magistrate, and communicated to his worship the important discovery. The Squire fell into a solemn flutter. "We must be regular, brother Masham; we must proceed by rule; we are a bench in our-

selves. Would that my clerk were here! We must send for Sealsigner forthwith. I will not decide without the statutes. The law must be consulted, and it must be obeyed. The fellow hath not brought my wig. 'Tis a case of murder, no doubt. A Peer of the realm murdered! You must break the intelligence to his surviving parent, and I will communicate to the Secretary of State. Can the body be found? That will prove the murder. Unless the body be found, the murder will not be proved, save the villain confess, which he will not do, unless he hath sudden compunctions. I have known sudden compunctions go a great way. We had a case before our bench last month; there was no evidence. It was not a case of murder; it was of woodcutting; there was no evidence; but the defendant had compunctions. Oh! here is my wig. We must send for Signsealer. He is clerk to our bench, and he must bring the statutes. 'Tis not simple murder this; it involves petty treason."

By this time his worship had completed his toilet, and he and his colleague took their way to the parlour they had inhabited the preceding evening. Mr. Signsealer was in attendance, much to the real, though concealed, satisfaction of Squire Mountmeadow. Their worships were seated like two consuls before the table, which Mr. Signsealer had duly arranged with writing materials and various piles of calf-bound volumes. Squire Mountmeadow then, arranging his countenance, announced that the bench was prepared, and mine host was instructed forthwith to summon the constable and his charge, together with Peter and the ostler as witnesses. There was a rush among some of the crowd who were nighest the scene to follow the prisoner into the room; and, sooth to say, the great Mountmeadow was much too enamoured of his own self-importance to be by any means a patron of close courts and private hearings; but then, though he loved his power to be witnessed, he was equally desirous that his person should be reverenced. It was

his boast that he could keep a court of quarter sessions as quiet as a church; and now, when the crowd rushed in with all those sounds of tumult incidental to such a movement, it required only Mountmeadow slowly to rise, and, drawing himself up to the full height of his gaunt figure, to knit his severe brow, and throw one of his peculiar looks around the chamber, to insure a most awful stillness. Instantly everything was so hushed, that you might have heard Signsealer knib his pen.

The witnesses were sworn; Peter proved that the pony belonged to Lord Cadurcis, and that his lordship had been missing from home for several days, and was believed to have quitted the abbey on this identical pony. Dr. Masham was ready, if necessary, to confirm this evidence. The accused adhered to his first account, that he had purchased the animal the day before at a neighbouring fair, and doggedly declined to answer any cross-examination. Squire Mountmeadow looked alike pompous and puzzled;

whispered to the Doctor; and then shook his head at Mr. Signsealer.

"I doubt whether there be satisfactory evidence of the murder, brother Masham," said the Squire; "what shall be our next step?"

"There is enough evidence to keep this fellow in custody," said the Doctor. "We must remand him, and make inquiries at the market town. I shall proceed there immediately. He is a strange-looking fellow," added the Doctor: "were it not for his carroty locks, I should scarcely take him for a native."

"Hem!" said the Squire, "I have my suspicions. Fellow," continued his worship, in an awful tone, "you say that you are a stranger, and that your name is Morgan; very suspicious all this; you have no one to speak to your character or station, and you are found in possession of stolen goods. The bench will remand you for the present, and will at any rate commit you for trial for the robbery. But here is a Peer of the realm missing, fellow, and you are most griev-

ously suspected of being concerned in his spiriting away, or even murder. You are upon tender ground, prisoner; 'tis a case verging on petty treason, if not petty treason, itself. Eh! Mr. Signsealer? Thus runs the law, as I take it? Prisoner, it would be well for you to consider your situation. Have you no compunctions? Compunctions might save you, if not a principal offender. It is your duty to assist the bench in executing justice. The Crown is merciful; you may be king's evidence."

Mr. Signsealer whispered the bench; he proposed that the prisoner's hat should be examined, as the name of its maker might afford a clue to his residence.

"True, true, Mr. Clerk," said Squire Mountmeadow, "I am coming to that. 'Tis a sound practice; I have known such a circumstance lead to great disclosures. But we must proceed in order. Order is everything. Constable, take the prisoner's hat off."

The constable took the hat off somewhat

rudely; so rudely, indeed, that the carroty locks came off in company with it, and revealed a profusion of long plaited hair which had been adroitly twisted under the wig, more in character with the countenance than its previous covering.

"A Jesuit, after all!" exclaimed the Squire.

"A gipsey, as it seems to me," whispered the Doctor.

"Still worse," said the Squire.

"Silence in the Court!" exclaimed the awful voice of Squire Mountmeadow, for the excitement of the audience was considerable. The disguise was generally esteemed as incontestable evidence of the murder. "Silence, or I will order the Court to be cleared. Constable, proclaim silence. This is an awful business," added the Squire, with a very long face. "Brother Masham, we must do our duty; but this is an awful business. At any rate we must try to discover the body. A Peer of the realm must not be suffered to lie murdered in a ditch. He must

have Christian burial, if possible, in the vaults of his ancestors."

When Morgana, for it was indeed he, observed the course affairs were taking, and ascertained that his detention under present circumstances was inevitable, he relaxed from his doggedness, and expressed a willingness to make a communication to the bench. Squire Mountmeadow lifted up his eyes to Heaven, as if entreating the interposition of Providence to guide him in his course; then turned to his brother magistrate, and then nodded to the clerk.

"He has compunctions, brother Masham," said his worship: "I told you so; he has compunctions. Trust me to deal with these fellows. He knew not his perilous situation; the hint of petty treason staggered him. Mr. Clerk, take down the prisoner's confession; the Court must be cleared; constable, clear the Court. Let a stout man stand on each side of the prisoner, to protect the bench. The magistracy of England will never shrink from doing their duty, but

they must be protected. Now, prisoner, the bench is ready to hear your confession. Conceal nothing, and if you were not a principal in the murder, or an accessary before the fact; eh, Mr. Clerk, thus runs the law, as I take it? there may be mercy; at any rate, if you be hanged, you will have the satisfaction of having cheerfully made the only atonement to society in your power."

"Hanging be damned!" said Morgana.

Squire Mountmeadow started from his seat, his cheeks distended with rage, his dull eyes for once flashing fire; "Did you ever witness such atrocity, brother Masham?" exclaimed his worship. "Did you hear the villain? I'll teach him to respect the bench. I'll fine him before he is executed, that I will!"

"The young gentleman to whom this pony belongs," continued the gipsey, "may or may not be a lord. I never asked him his name, and he never told it me; but he sought hospitality of me and my people, and we gave it him, and he

lives with us, of his own free choice. The pony is of no use to him now, and so I came to sell it for our common good."

"A Peer of the realm turned gipsey!" exclaimed the Squire. "A very likely tale! I'll teach you to come here and tell your cock-and-bull stories to two of his majesty's justices of the peace. 'Tis a flat case of robbery and murder, and I venture to say something else. You shall go to gaol directly, and the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

"Nay," said the gipsey, appealing to Dr. Masham, "you, sir, appear to be a friend of this youth. You will not regain him by sending me to gaol. Load me, if you will, with irons, surround me with armed men, but at least give me the opportunity of proving the truth of what I say. I offer in two hours to produce to you the youth, and you shall find he is living with my people in content and peace."

"Content and fiddlestick!" said the Squire, in a rage.

"Brother Mountmeadow," said the Doctor, in a low tone, to his colleague, "I have private duties to perform to this family. Pardon me if, with all deference to your sounder judgment and greater experience, I myself accept the prisoner's offer."

"Brother Masham, you are one of his majesty's justices of the peace, you are a brother magistrate, and you are a Doctor of Divinity; you owe a duty to your country, and you owe a duty to yourself. Is it wise, is it decorous, that one of the Quorum should go a-gipseying? Is it possible that you can credit this preposterous tale? Brother Masham, there will be a rescue, or my name is not Mountmeadow."

In spite, however, of all these solemn warnings, the good Doctor, who was not altogether unaware of the character of his pupil, and could comprehend that it was very possible the statement of the gipsey might be genuine, continued without very much offending his colleague, who looked upon his conduct indeed rather with pity than resentment, to accept the offer of Morgana;

and consequently, well-secured and guarded, and preceding the Doctor, who rode behind the cart with his servant, the gipsey soon sallied forth from the inn-yard, and requested the driver to guide his course in the direction of the forest.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was the afternoon of the third day after the arrival of Cadurcis at the gypsey encampment, and nothing had yet occurred to make him repent his flight from the abbey, and the choice of life he had made. He had experienced nothing but kindness and hospitality, while the beautiful Beruna seemed quite content to pass her life in studying his amusement. The weather, too, had been extremely favourable to his new mode of existence; and, stretched at his length upon the turf, with his head on Beruna's lap, and his eyes fixed upon the rich forest foliage glowing in the autumnal sunset, Plantagenet only wondered that he could

have endured, for so many years, the shackles of his common-place home.

His companions were awaiting the return of their leader, Morgana, who had been absent since the preceding day, and who had departed on Plantagenet's pony. Most of them were lounging or strolling in the vicinity of their tents; the children were playing; the old woman was cooking at the fire; and altogether, save that the hour was not so late, the scene presented much the same aspect as when Cadurcis had first beheld it. As for his present occupation, Beruna was giving him a lesson in the gypsey language, which he was acquiring with a rapid facility, which quite exceeded all his previous efforts in such acquisitions.

Suddenly a scout sang out that a party was in sight. The men instantly disappeared; the women were on the alert; and one ran forward as a spy, on the pretence of telling fortunes. This bright-eyed professor of palmistry soon, however, returned, running, and out of

breath, yet chatting all the time with inconceivable rapidity, and accompanying the startling communication she was evidently making with the most animated gestures. Beruna started up and, leaving the astonished Cadurcis, joined them. She seemed alarmed. Cadurcis was soon convinced there was consternation in the camp.

Suddenly a horseman galloped up, and was immediately followed by a companion. They called out, as if encouraging followers, and one of them immediately galloped away again, as if to detail the results of their reconnoissance. Before Cadurcis could well rise and make inquiries as to what was going on, a light cart, containing several men, drove up, and in it, a prisoner, he detected Morgana. The branches of the trees concealed for a moment two other horsemen who followed the cart; but Cadurcis, to his infinite alarm and mortification, soon recognised Dr. Masham and Peter.

When the gypseys found their leader was

captive, they no longer attempted to conceal themselves; they all came forward, and would have clustered round the cart, had not the riders, as well as those who more immediately guarded the prisoner, prevented them. Morgana spoke some words in a loud voice to the gypseys, and they immediately appeared less agitated then turning to Dr. Masham, he said in English, "Behold your child!"

Instantly two gypsey men seized Cadurcis, and led him to the Doctor.

"How, now, my lord?" said the worthy Rector, in a stern voice, "is this your duty to your mother and your friends?"

Cadurcis looked down, but rather dogged than ashamed.

"You have brought an innocent man into great peril," continued the Doctor. "This person, no longer a prisoner, has been arrested on suspicion of robbery, and even murder, through your freak. Morgana, or whatever your name may be, here is some reward for your treatment

of this child, and some compensation for your detention. Mount your pony, Lord Cadurcis, and return to your home with me."

"This is my home, Sir," said Plantagenet.

"Lord Cadurcis, this childish nonsense must cease; it has already endangered the life of your mother, nor can I answer for her safety, if you lose a moment in returning."

"Child, you must return," said Morgana.

"Child!" said Plantagenet, and he walked some steps away, and leant against a tree. "You promised that I should remain," said he, addressing himself reproachfully to Morgana.

"You are not your own master," said the gypsey; "your remaining here will only endanger and disturb us. Fortunately we have nothing to fear from laws we have never outraged; but had there been a judge less wise and gentle than the master here, our peaceful family might have been all harassed and hunted to the very death."

He waved his hand, and addressed some

words to his tribe, whereupon two brawny fellows seized Cadurcis, and placed him again, in spite of his struggling, upon his pony, with the same irresistible facility with which they had a few nights before dismounted him. The little lord looked very sulky, but his position was beginning to get ludicrous. Morgana, pocketing his five guineas, leaped over the side of the cart, and offered to guide the Doctor and his attendants through the forest. They moved on accordingly. It was the work of an instant, and Cadurcis suddenly found himself returning home between the Rector and Peter. Not a word, however, escaped his lips; once, only, he moved; the light branch of a tree, aimed with delicate precision, touched his back; he looked round; it was Beruna. She kissed her hand to him, and a tear stole down his pale, sullen cheek, as, taking from his breast his handkerchief, he threw it behind him, unperceived, that she might pick it up and keep it for his sake.

After proceeding two or three miles, under the

guidance of Morgana, the equestrians gained the road, though it still ran through the forest. Here the Doctor dismissed the gypsey man, with whom he had occasionally conversed during their progress; but not a sound ever escaped from the mouth of Cadurcis, or rather, the captive who was now substituted in Morgana's stead. The Doctor now addressing himself to Plantagenet, informed him that it was of importance that they should make the best of their way, and so he put spurs to his mare, and Cadurcis sullenly complied with the intimation. At this rate, in the course of little more than another hour, they arrived in sight of the demesne of Cadurcis, where they pulled up their steeds.

They entered the park—they approached the portal of the abbey—at length they dismounted. Their coming was announced by a servant, who had recognised his lord at a distance, and had ran on before with the tidings. When they entered the abbey, they were met by Lady An-

nabel in the cloisters; her countenance was very serious. She shook hands with Doctor Masham, but did not speak, and immediately led him aside. Cadurcis remained standing in the very spot where Doctor Masham left him, as if he were quite a stranger in the place, and was no longer master of his own conduct. Suddenly Doctor Masham—who was at the end of the cloister, while Lady Annabel was mounting the staircase—looked round with a very pale face, and said in an agitated voice, "Lord Cadurcis, Lady Annabel wishes to speak to you in the saloon."

Cadurcis immediately, but slowly, repaired to the saloon. Lady Annabel was walking up and down it. She seemed greatly disturbed. When she saw him, she put her arm round his neck very affectionately, and said in a low voice, "My dearest Plantagenet, it has devolved upon me to communicate to you some very distressing intelligence." Her voice faultered, and the tears stole down her cheek.

"My mother, then, is dangerously ill?" he inquired in a calm but softened tone.

"It is even sadder news than that, dear child."

Cadurcis looked about him wildly, and then with an inquiring glance at Lady Annabel—

"There can be but one thing worse than that,' he at length said.

"What if it have happened?" said Lady Annabel.

He threw himself into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. After a few minutes he looked up and said, in a low but distinct voice—"It is too terrible to think of; it is too terrible to mention; but, if it have happened, let me be alone."

Lady Annabel approached him with a light step; she embraced him, and, whispering that she should be found in the next room, she quitted the apartment.

Cadurcis remained seated for more than half an hour without changing in the slightest degree

his position. The twilight died away; it grew quite dark; he looked up with a slight shiver, and then quitted the apartment.

In the adjoining room, Lady Annabel was seated with Doctor Masham, and giving him the details of the fatal event. It had occurred that morning. Mrs. Cadurcis, who had never slept a wink since her knowledge of her son's undoubted departure, and scarcely for an hour been free from the most violent epileptic fits, had fallen early in the morning into a doze, which lasted about half an hour, and from which her medical attendant, who with Pauncefort had sat up with her during the night, augured the most favourable consequences. About half-past six o'clock she woke, and inquired whether Plantagenet had returned. They answered her that Doctor Masham had not yet arrived, but would probably be at the abbey in the course of the morning. She said it would be too late. They endeavoured to encourage her, but she asked to see Lady Anna-

bel, who was immediately called, and lost no time in repairing to her. When Mrs. Cadurcis recognised her, she held out her hand, and said in a dying tone—"It was my fault; it was ever my fault; it is too late now; let him find a mother in you." She never spoke again, and in the course of an hour expired.

While Lady Annabel and the Doctor were dwelling on these sad circumstances, and debating whether he should venture to approach Plantagenet, and attempt to console him,—for the evening was now far advanced, and nearly three hours had elapsed since the fatal communication had been made to him,—it happened that Mistress Pauncefort chanced to pass Mrs. Cadurcis' room, and as she did so she heard some one violently sobbing. She listened, and hearing the sounds frequently repeated, she entered the room, which, but for her candle, would have been quite dark, and there she found Lord Cadurcis kneeling and weeping by his mother's bed-side. He seemed annoyed at being seen

and disturbed, but his spirit was too broken to murmur. "La! my lord," said Mistress Pauncefort, "you must not take on so; you must not, indeed. I am sure this dark room is enough to put any one in low spirits. Now do go down stairs, and sit with my lady and the Doctor, and try to be cheerful; that is a dear good young gentleman. I wish Miss Venetia were here, and then she would amuse you. But you must not take on, because there is no use in it. You must exert yourself, for what is done cannot be undone; and, as the Doctor told us last Sunday, we must all die; and well for those who die with a good conscience; and I am sure the poor dear lady that is gone, must have had a good conscience, because she had a good heart, and I never heard any one say the contrary. Now do exert yourself, my dear lord, and try to be cheerful, do; for there is nothing like a little exertion in these cases, for God's will must be done, and it is not for us to say yea or nay, and taking on is a murmuring against God's provi-

dence." And so Mistress Pauncefort would have continued urging the usual topics of coarse and common-place consolation ; but Cadurcis only answered with a sigh that came from the bottom of his heart, and said with streaming eyes, " Ah ! Mrs. Pauncefort, God had only given me one friend in this world, and there she lies !"

CHAPTER XVIII.

The first conviction that there is death in the house is perhaps the most awful moment of youth. When we are young, we think that not only ourselves, but that all about us, are immortal. Until the arrow has struck a victim round our own hearth, death is merely an unmeaning word; until then, its casual mention has stamped no idea upon our brain. There are few, even among those least susceptible of thought and emotion, in whose hearts and minds the first death in the family does not act as a very powerful revelation of the mysteries of life, and of their own being; there are few who, after such a catastrophe, do not look upon the world and

the world's ways, at least for a time, with changed and tempered feelings. It recalls the past, it makes us ponder over the future; and youth, gay and light-hearted youth, is taught, for the first time, to regret and to fear.

On Lord Cadurcis, a child of pensive temperament, and in whose strange and yet undeveloped character there was, amid lighter elements, a constitutional principle of melancholy, the sudden decease of his mother produced a very profound effect. All was forgotten of his parent, except the intimate and natural tie, and her warm and genuine affection. He was now alone in the world; for reflection impressed upon him at this moment, what the course of existence too generally teaches to us all, that mournful truth, that, after all, we have no friends that we can depend upon in this life but our parents. All other intimacies, however ardent, are liable to cool; all other confidence, however unlimited, to be violated. In the phantasmagoria of life, the friend with whom we have cultivated mutual

trust for years is often suddenly or gradually estranged from us, or becomes, from painful, yet irresistible, circumstances, even our deadliest foe. As for women, as for the mistresses of our hearts, who has not learnt that the links of passion are fragile as they are glittering; and that the bosom on which we have reposed with idolatry all our secret sorrows and sanguine hopes, eventually becomes the very heart that exults in our misery and baffles our welfare? Where is the enamoured face that smiled upon our early love, and was to shed tears over our grave? Where are the choice companions of our youth, with whom we were to breast the difficulties and share the triumphs of existence? Even in this inconstant world, what changes like the heart? Love is a dream, and friendship a delusion. No wonder we grow callous; for how few have the opportunity of returning to the hearth which they quitted in levity or thoughtless weariness, yet which alone is faithful to them; whose sweet affections require not

the stimulus of prosperity or fame, the lure of accomplishments, or the tribute of flattery; but which are constant to us in distress, and console us even in disgrace?

Before she retired for the night, Lady Annabel was anxious to see Plantagenet. Mistress Pauncefort had informed her of his visit to his mother's room. Lady Annabel found Cadurcis in the gallery, now partially lighted by the moon, which had recently risen. She entered with her light, as if she were on her way to her own room, and not seeking him.

"Dear Plantagenet," she said, "will you not go to bed?"

"I do not intend to go to bed to-night," he replied.

She approached him and took him by the hand, which he did not withdraw from her, and they walked together once or twice up and down the gallery.

"I think, dear child," said Lady Annabel, "you had better come and sit with us."

"I like to be alone" was his answer; but not in a sullen voice, low and faltering.

"But in sorrow we should be with our friends," said Lady Annabel.

"I have no friends," he answered. "I only had one."

"I am your friend, dear child; I am your mother now, and you shall find me one if you like. And Venetia, have you forgotten your sister? Is she not your friend? And Dr. Masham, surely you cannot doubt his friendship?"

Cadurcis tried to stifle a sob. "Ay, Lady Annabel," he said, "you are my friend now, and so are you all; and you know I love you very much. But you were not my friends two years ago; and things will change again; they will indeed. A mother is your friend as long as she lives; she cannot help being your friend."

"You shall come to Cherbury, and live with us," said Lady Annabel. "You know you love

Cherbury, and you shall find it a home, a real home."

He pressed her hand to his lips; the hand was covered with his tears.

"We will go to Cherbury to-morrow, dear Plantagenet; remaining here will only make you sad."

"I will never leave Cadurcis again while my mother is in this house," he said, in a firm and serious voice. And then, after a moment's pause, he added. "I wish to know when the burial is to take place."

"We will ask Dr. Masham," replied Lady Annabel. "Come, let us go to him; come, my own child."

He permitted himself to be led away. They descended to the small apartment where Lady Annabel had been previously sitting. They found the Doctor there; he rose and pressed Plantagenet's hand with great emotion. They made room for him at the fire between them; he sat in silence with his gaze intently fixed

upon the decaying embers, yet did not quit his hold of Lady Annabel's hand. He found it a consolation to him; it linked him to a being who seemed to love him. As long as he held her hand he did not seem quite alone in the world.

Now nobody spoke; for Lady Annabel felt that Cadurcis was in some degree solaced; and she thought it unwise to interrupt the more composed train of his thoughts. It was, indeed, Plantagenet himself who first broke silence.

"I do not think I can go to bed, Lady Annabel," he said. "The thought of this night is terrible to me. I do not think it ever can end. I would much sooner sit up in this room."

"Nay! my child, sleep is a great consoler; try to go to bed, love."

"I should like to sleep in my mother's room" was his strange reply. "It seems to me that I could sleep there. And if I woke in the night, I should like to see her."

Lady Annabel and the Doctor exchanged looks.

"I think," said the Doctor, "you had better sleep in my room, and then, if you wake in the night, you will have some one to speak to. You will find that a comfort."

"Yes, that you will," said Lady Annabel. "I will go and have the sofa bed made up in the Doctor's room for you. Indeed that will be the very best plan."

So at last, but not without a struggle, they persuaded Cadurcis to retire. Lady Annabel embraced him tenderly when she bade him good night; and, indeed, he felt consoled by her affection.

As nothing could persuade Plantagenet to leave the abbey until his mother was buried, Lady Annabel resolved to take up her abode there, and she sent the next morning for Venetia. There were a great many arrangements to make about the burial and the mourning; and Lady Annabel and Dr. Masham were

obliged, in consequence, to go the next morning to Southport; but they delayed their departure until the arrival of Venetia, that Cadurcis might not be left alone.

The meeting between himself and Venetia was a very sad one, and yet her companionship was a great solace. Venetia urged every topic that she fancied could reassure his spirits, and upon the happy home he would find at Cherbury.

"Ah!" said Cadurcis, "they will not leave me here; I am sure of that. I think our happy days are over, Venetia."

What mourner has not felt the magic of time? Before the funeral could take place, Cadurcis had recovered somewhat of his usual cheerfulness, and would indulge with Venetia in plans of their future life. And living, as they all were, under the same roof, sharing the same sorrows, participating in the same cares, and all about to wear the same mournful emblems of their domestic calamity, it was difficult for him

to believe that he was indeed that desolate being he had at first correctly estimated himself. Here were true friends, if such could exist; here were fine sympathies, pure affections, innocent and disinterested hearts! Every domestic tie yet remained perfect, except the spell-bound tie of blood. That wanting, all was a bright and happy vision, that might vanish in an instant, and for ever; that perfect, even the least graceful, the most repulsive home, had its irresistible charms; and its loss, when once experienced, might be mourned for ever, and could never be restored.

CHAPTER XIX.

After the funeral of Mrs. Cadurcis, the family returned to Cherbury with Plantagenet, who was hereafter to consider it his home. All that the most tender solicitude could devise to reconcile him to the change in his life was fulfilled by Lady Annabel and her daughter, and, under their benignant influence, he soon regained his usual demeanour. His days were now spent as in the earlier period of their acquaintance, with the exception of those painful returns to home, which had once been a source to him of so much gloom and unhappiness. He pursued his studies as of old, and shared the amusements of Venetia. His allotted room was ornamented by

her drawings, and in the evenings they read aloud by turns to Lady Annabel the volume which she selected. The abbey he never visited again after his mother's funeral.

Some weeks had passed in this quiet and contented manner, when one day Doctor Masham, who, since the death of his mother, had been in correspondence with his guardian, received a letter from that nobleman, to announce that he had made arrangements for sending his ward to Eton, and to request that he would accordingly instantly proceed to the metropolis. This announcement occasioned both Cadurcis and Venetia poignant affliction. The idea of separation was to both of them most painful; and although Lady Annabel herself was in some degree prepared for an arrangement, which sooner or later she considered inevitable, she was herself scarcely less distressed. The good Doctor, in some degree to break the bitterness of parting, proposed accompanying Plantagenet to London, and himself personally delivering the

charge, in whose welfare they were so much interested, to his guardian. Nevertheless, it was a very sad affair, and the week which was to intervene before his departure found both himself and Venetia often in tears. They no longer took any delight in their mutual studies, but passed the day walking about and visiting old haunts, and endeavouring to console each other for what they both deemed a great calamity, and which was, indeed, the only serious misfortune Venetia had herself experienced in the whole course of her serene career.

"But if I were really your brother," said Plantagenet, "I must have quitted you the same, Venetia. Boys always go to school; and then we shall be so happy when I return!"

"Oh! but we are so happy now, Plantagenet. I cannot believe that we are going to part. And are you sure that you will return? Perhaps your guardian will not let you, and will wish you to spend your holidays at his house. His house will be your home now."

It was impossible for a moment to forget the sorrow that was impending over them. There were so many preparations to be made for his departure, that every instant something occurred to remind them of their sorrow. Venetia sat with tears in her eyes marking his new pocket-handkerchiefs, which they had all gone to Southport to purchase, for Plantagenet asked, as a particular favour, that no one should mark them but Venetia. Then Lady Annabel gave Plantagenet a writing-case, and Venetia filled it with pens and paper, that he might never want means to communicate with them; and her evenings were passed in working him a purse, which Lady Annabel took care should be well stocked. All day long there seemed something going on to remind them of what was about to happen; and as for Pauncefort, she flounced in and out the room fifty times a-day, with "What is to be done about my lord's shirts, my lady? I think his lordship had better have another dozen, your la'ship. Better too much than too little, I

always say;" or, "O! my lady, your la'ship cannot form an idea of what a state my lord's stockings are in, my lady. I think I had better go over to Southport with John, my lady, and buy him some;" or "Please, my lady, did I understand your la'ship spoke to the tailor on Thursday about my lord's things? I suppose your la'ship knows my lord has got no great-coat?"

Every one of these inquiries made Venetia's heart tremble. Then there was the sad habit of dating every coming day by its distance from the fatal one. There was the last day but four, and the last day but three, and the last day but two. The last day but one at length arrived; and at length, too, though it seemed incredible, the last day itself.

Plantagenet and Venetia both rose very early, that they might make it as long as possible. They sighed involuntarily when they met, and then they went about to pay last visits to every creature and object of which they had been so long fond. Plantagenet went to bid farewell to

the horses, and adieu to the cows, and then walked down to the woodman's cottage, and then to shake hands with the keeper. He would not say "Good-bye" to the household until the very last moment; and as for Marmion, the blood-hound, he accompanied both of them so faithfully in this melancholy ramble, and kept so close to both, that it was useless to break the sad intelligence to him yet.

"I think now, Venetia, we have been to see every thing," said Plantagenet, "I shall see the peacocks at breakfast time. I wish Eton was near Cherbury, and then I could come home on Sunday. I cannot bear going to Cadurcis again, but I should like you to go once a week, and try to keep up our garden, and look after every thing, though there is not much that will not take care of itself, except the garden. We made that together, and I could not bear its being neglected."

Venetia could not assure him that no wish of his should be neglected, because she was weeping.

"I am glad the Doctor," he continued, "is going to take me to town. I should be very wretched by myself. But he will put me in mind of Cherbury, and we can talk together of Lady Annabel and you. Hark! the bell rings; we must go to breakfast, the last breakfast but one."

Lady Annabel endeavoured, by unusual good spirits, to cheer up her little friends. She spoke of Plantagenet's speedy return so much as a matter of course, and the pleasant things they were to do when he came back, that she really succeeded in exciting a smile in Venetia's April face, for she was smiling amid tears.

Although it was the last day, time hung heavily on their hands. After breakfast they went over the house together; and Cadurcis, half with genuine feeling and half in a spirit of mockery of their sorrow, made a speech to the inanimate walls, as if they were aware of his intended departure. At length, in their progress, they passed the door of the closed apartments, and here, holding Venetia's hand, he

stopped, and, with an expression of irresistible humour, making a very low bow to them, he said, very gravely, "And good-bye rooms that I have never entered; perhaps, before I come back, Venetia will find out what is locked up in you!"

Doctor Masham arrived for dinner, and in a post-chaise. The unusual conveyance reminded them of the morrow very keenly. Venetia could not bear to see the Doctor's portmanteau taken out and carried into the hall. She had hopes, until then, that something would happen and prevent all this misery. Cadurcis whispered her, "I say, Venetia, do not you wish this was winter?"

"Why, Plantagenet?"

"Because then we might have a good snow-storm, and be blocked up again for a week."

Venetia looked at the sky, but not a cloud was to be seen.

The Doctor was glad to warm himself at the hall-fire, for it was a fresh autumnal afternoon.

"Are you cold, Sir?" said Venetia, approaching him.

"I am, my little maiden," said the Doctor.

"Do you think there is any chance of its snowing, Doctor Masham?"

"Snowing! my little maiden; what can you be thinking of?"

The dinner was rather gayer than might have been expected. The Doctor was jocular, Lady Annabel very lively, and Plantagenet excited by an extraordinary glass of wine. Venetia alone remained dispirited. The Doctor made mock speeches and proposed toasts, and told Plantagenet that he must learn to make speeches too, or what would he do when he was in the House of Lords? And then Plantagenet tried to make a speech, and proposed Venetia's health; and then Venetia, who could not bear to hear herself praised by him on such a day—the last day—burst into tears. Her mother called her to her side and consoled her, and Plantagenet jumped up and wiped her eyes with one of those very

pocket-handkerchiefs on which she had embroidered his cipher and coronet with her own beautiful hair.

Towards evening Plantagenet began to experience the re-action of his artificial spirits. The Doctor had fallen into a gentle slumber, Lady Annabel had quitted the room, Venetia sat with her hand in Plantagenet's on a stool by the fireside. Both were very sad and silent. At last Venetia said, "O Plantagenet, I wish I were your real sister! Perhaps, when I see you again, you will forget this," and she turned the jewel that was suspended round her neck, and showed him the inscription.

"I am sure when I see you again, Venetia," he replied, "the only difference will be that I shall love you more than ever."

"I hope so," said Venetia.

"I am sure of it. Now remember what we are talking about. When we meet again, we shall see which of us two will love each other the most."

"O Plantagenet, I hope they will be kind to you at Eton."

"I will make them."

"And, whenever you are the least unhappy, you will write to us?"

"I shall never be unhappy about anything but being away from you. As for the rest, I will make people respect me; I know what I am."

"Because, if they do not behave well to you, mamma could ask Doctor Masham to come and see you, and they will attend to him; and I would ask him too."

"I wonder," she continued, after a moment's pause, "if you have everything you want. I am quite sure, the instant you are gone, we shall remember something you ought to have; and then I shall be quite brokenhearted."

"I have got everything."

"You said you wanted a large knife."

"Yes! but I am going to buy one in London. Doctor Masham says he will take me to a place where the finest knives in the world are to be

bought. It is a great thing to go to London with Dr. Masham."

"I have never written your name in your Bible and Prayer-book. I will do it this evening."

"Lady Annabel is to write it in the Bible, and you are to write it in the Prayer-book."

"You are to write to us from London by Doctor Masham, if only a line."

"I shall not fail."

"Never mind about your hand-writing; but mind you write."

At this moment Lady Annabel's step was heard, and Plantagenet said, "Give me a kiss, Venetia, for I do not mean to bid good-bye to-night."

"But you will not go to-morrow before we are up."

"Yes, we shall."

"Now, Plantagenet, I shall be up to bid you good-bye; mind that."

Lady Annabel entered, the Doctor woke,

lights followed, the servant made up the fire, and the room looked cheerful again. After tea, the names were duly written in the Bible and Prayer-book ; the last arrangements were made, all the baggage was brought down into the hall, all ransacked their memory and fancy to see if it were possible that anything that Plantagenet could require was either forgotten or had been omitted. The clock struck ten ; Lady Annabel rose. The travellers were to part at an early hour: she shook hands with Doctor Masham, but Cadurcis was to bid her farewell in her dressing-room, and then, with heavy hearts and glistening eyes, they all separated. And thus ended the last day !

CHAPTER XX.

VENETIA passed a restless night. She was so resolved to be awake in time for Plantagenet's departure, that she could not sleep; and at length, towards morning, fell, from exhaustion, into a light slumber, from which she sprang up convulsively, roused by the sound of the wheels of the post-chaise. She looked out of her window, and saw the servant strapping on the portmanteaus. Shortly after this she heard Plantagenet's step in the vestibule; he passed her room, and proceeded to her mother's dressing-room, at the door of which she heard him knock, and then there was silence.

"You are in good time," said Lady Annabel,

who was seated in an easy chair when Plantagenet entered her room. "Is the Doctor up?"

"He is breakfasting."

"And have you breakfasted?"

"I have no appetite."

"You should take something, my child, before you go. Now, come hither, my dear Plantagenet," she said, extending her hand; "listen to me, one word. When you arrive in London, you will go to your guardian's. He is a great man, and I believe a very good one, and the law and your father's will have placed him in the position of a parent to you. You must therefore love, honour, and obey him; and I doubt not he will deserve all your affection, respect, and duty. Whatever he desires or counsels you will perform and follow. As long as you act according to his wishes, you cannot be wrong. But, my dear Plantagenet, if by any chance it ever happens, for strange things sometimes happen in this world, that you are in trouble and require a friend, remember that Cherbury is also your

home; the home of your heart, if not of the law; and that not merely from my own love for you, but, because I promised your poor mother on her death-bed, I esteem myself morally, although not legally, in the light of a parent to you. You will find Eton a great change; you will experience many trials and temptations; but you will triumph over and withstand them all, if you will attend to these few directions. Fear God; morning and night, let nothing induce you ever to omit your prayers to him; you will find that praying will make you happy. Obey your superiors, always treat your masters with respect. Ever speak the truth. As long as you adhere to this rule, you never can be involved in any serious misfortune. A deviation from truth is, in general, the foundation of all misery. Be kind to your companions, but be firm. Do not be laughed into doing that which you know to be wrong. Be modest and humble, but ever respect yourself. Remember who you are, and also that it is your duty to excel. Providence

has given you a great lot. Think ever that you are born to perform great duties.

"God bless you, Plantagenet!" continued her ladyship, after a slight pause, with a faltering voice—"God bless you, my sweet child. And God will bless you, if you remember him. Try also to remember us," she added, as she embraced him, and placed in his hand Venetia's well-lined purse. "Do not forget Cherbury and all it contains; hearts that love you dearly, and will pray ever for your welfare."

Plantagenet leant upon her bosom. He had entered the room resolved to be composed, with an air even of cheerfulness, but his tender heart yielded to the first appeal to his affections. He could only murmur out some broken syllables of devotion, and almost unconsciously found that he had quitted the chamber.

With streaming eyes and hesitating steps he was proceeding along the vestibule, when he heard his name called by a low sweet voice. He looked round; it was Venetia. Never had

he beheld such a beautiful vision. She was muffled up in her dressing-gown, her small white feet only guarded from the cold by her slippers. Her golden hair seemed to reach her waist, her cheek was flushed, her large blue eyes glittered with tears.

"Plantagenet," she said—

Neither of them could speak. They embraced, they mingled their tears together, and every instant they wept more plenteously. At length a footstep was heard; Venetia murmured a blessing, and vanished.

Cadurcis lingered on the stairs a moment to compose himself. He wiped his eyes; he tried to look undisturbed. All the servants were in the hall; from Mistress Pauncefort to the scullion there was not a dry eye. All loved the little lord, he was so gracious and so gentle. Every one asked leave to touch his hand before he went. He tried to smile and say something kind to all. He recognised the gamekeeper, and told him to do what he liked at Cadurcis; said

something to the coachman about his pony; and begged Mistress Pauncefort, quite aloud, to take great care of her young mistress. As he was speaking, he felt something rubbing against his hand: it was Marmion, the old blood-hound. He also came to bid his adieus. Cadurcis patted him with great affection, and said, "Ah! my old fellow, we shall yet meet again."

The Doctor appeared, smiling as usual, made his inquiries whether all were right, nodded to the weeping household, called Plantagenet his brave boy, and patted him on the back, and bade him jump into the chaise. Another moment, and Doctor Masham had also entered; the door was closed, the fatal "All right" sung out, and Lord Cadurcis was whirled away from that Cherbury where he was so loved!

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE is not dated merely by years. Events are sometimes the best calendars. There are epochs in our existence which cannot be ascertained by a formal appeal to the registry. The arrival of the Cadurcis family at their old abbey, their consequent intimacy at Cherbury, the death of the mother, and the departure of the son—these were events which had been crowded into a space of less than two years; but those two years were not only the most eventful in the life of Venetia Herbert, but in their influence upon the development of her mind, and the formation of her character, far exceeded the effects of all her previous existence.

Venetia once more found herself with no companion but her mother, but in vain she attempted to recall the feelings she had before experienced under such circumstances, and to revert to the resources she had before commanded. No longer could she wander in imaginary kingdoms, or transform the limited world of her experience into a boundless region of enchanted amusement. Her play-pleasure hours were fled for ever. She sighed for her faithful and sympathising companion. The empire of fancy yielded without a struggle to the conquering sway of memory.

For the first few weeks Venetia was restless and dispirited, and when she was alone she often wept. A mysterious instinct prompted her, however, not to exhibit such emotion before her mother. Yet she loved to hear Lady Annabel talk of Plantagenet, and a visit to the abbey was ever her favourite walk. Sometimes, too, a letter arrived from Lord Cadurcis, and this was great joy, but such communications were rare. Nothing is more difficult than for a junior

boy at a public school to maintain a correspondence; yet his letters were most affectionate, and always dwelt upon the prospect of his return. The period for this hoped-for return at length arrived, but it brought no Plantagenet. His guardian wished that the holydays should be spent under his roof. Still at intervals Cadurcis wrote to Cherbury, to which, as time flew on, it seemed destined he never was to return. Vacation followed vacation, alike passed with his guardian, either in London or at a country seat still more remote from Cherbury, until at length it became so much a matter of course that his guardian's house should be esteemed his home, that Plantagenet ceased to allude even to the prospect of return. In time his letters became rarer and rarer, until, at length, they altogether ceased. Meanwhile Venetia had overcome the original pang of separation; if not as gay as in old days, she was serene and very studious; delighting less in her flowers and birds, but much more in her books, and pursuing

her studies with an earnestness and assiduity which her mother was rather fain to check than to encourage. Venetia Herbert, indeed, promised to become a most accomplished woman. She had a fine ear for music, a ready tongue for languages; already she emulated her mother's skill in the arts; while the library of Cherbury afforded welcome and inexhaustible resources to a girl whose genius deserved the richest and most sedulous cultivation, and whose peculiar situation, independent of her studious predisposition, rendered reading a pastime to her rather than a task. Lady Annabel watched the progress of her daughter with the most lively interest, and spared no efforts to assist the formation of her principles and her taste. That deep religious feeling which was the characteristic of the mother had been carefully and early cherished in the heart of the child, and in time the unrivalled writings of the great divines of our Church became a principal portion of her reading. Order, method, severe

study, strict religious exercise, with no amusement or relaxation but of the most simple and natural character, and with a complete seclusion from society, altogether formed a system, which, acting upon a singularly susceptible and gifted nature, secured the promise in Venetia Herbert, at fourteen years of age, of a very extraordinary woman; a system, however, against which her lively and somewhat restless mind might probably have rebelled, had not that system been so thoroughly imbued with all the melting spell of maternal affection. It was the inspiration of this sacred love that hovered like a guardian angel over the life of Venetia. It roused her from her morning slumbers with an embrace, it sanctified her evening pillow with a blessing; it anticipated the difficulty of the student's page, and guided the faltering hand of the hesitating artist; it refreshed her memory, it modulated her voice; it accompanied her in the cottage, and knelt by her at the altar. Marvellous and beautiful is a mother's love! And

when Venetia, with her strong feelings and enthusiastic spirit, would look around and mark that a graceful form and a bright eye were for ever watching over her wants and wishes, instructing with sweetness, and soft even with advice, her whole soul rose to her mother, all thoughts and feelings were concentrated in that sole existence, and she desired no happier destiny than to pass through life living in the light of her mother's smiles, and clinging with passionate trust to that beneficent and guardian form.

But with all her quick and profound feelings Venetia was thoughtful, and even shrewd, and when she was alone her very love for her mother, and her gratitude for such an ineffable treasure as parental affection, would force her mind to a subject which at intervals had haunted her even from her earliest childhood. Why had she only one parent? What mystery was this that enveloped that great tie? For that there was a mystery Venetia felt as assured as that she

was a daughter. By a process which she could not analyse, her father had become a forbidden subject. True, Lady Annabel had placed no formal prohibition upon its mention ; nor at her present age was Venetia one who would be influenced in her conduct by the by-gone and arbitrary intimations of a menial; nevertheless, that the mention of her father would afford pain to the being she loved best in the world was a conviction which had grown with her years and strengthened with her strength. Pardonable, natural, even laudable as was the anxiety of the daughter upon such a subject, an instinct with which she could not struggle closed the lips of Venetia for ever upon this topic. His name was never mentioned, his past existence was never alluded to. Who was he? That he was of noble family, and great position, her name betokened, and the state in which they lived. He must have died very early ; perhaps even before her mother gave her birth. A dreadful lot indeed; and yet was the grief that even such

a dispensation might occasion, so keen, so overwhelming, that after fourteen long years his name might not be permitted, even for an instant, to pass the pale lips of his bereaved wife? Was his child to be deprived of the only solace for his loss, the consolation of cherishing his memory? Strange, passing strange indeed, and very bitter! At Cherbury the family of Herbert were honoured only from tradition. Until the arrival of Lady Annabel, as we have before mentioned, they had not resided at the hall for more than half a century. There were no old retainers there from whom Venetia might glean, without suspicion, the information for which she panted. Slight, too, as was Venetia's experience of society, there were times when she could not resist the impression that her mother was not happy; that there was some secret sorrow that weighed upon her spirit, some grief that gnawed at her heart. Could it be still the recollection of her lost sire? Could one so religious, so resigned, so assured of meeting the lost-one in a better

world, brood with a repining soul over the will of her Creator? Such conduct was entirely at variance with all the tenets of Lady Annabel. It was not thus she consoled the bereaved, that she comforted the widow, and solaced the orphan. Venetia, too, observed everything and forgot nothing. Not an incident of her earliest childhood that was not as fresh in her memory as if it had occurred yesterday. Her memory was naturally keen; living in solitude, with nothing to distract it, its impressions never faded away. She had never forgotten her mother's tears the day that she and Plantagenet had visited Marringhurst. Somehow or other Dr. Masham seemed connected with this sorrow. Whenever Lady Annabel was most dispirited it was after an interview with that gentleman; yet the presence of the Doctor always gave her pleasure, and he was the most kind-hearted and cheerful of men. Perhaps, after all, it was only her illusion; perhaps, after all, it was the memory of her father to which her mother was devoted, and which occasionally

overcame her; perhaps she ventured to speak of him to Doctor Masham, though not to her daughter, and this might account for that occasional agitation which Venetia had observed at his visits. And yet, and yet, and yet—in vain she reasoned. There is a strange sympathy which whispers convictions that no evidence can authorise, and no arguments dispel. Venetia Herbert, particularly as she grew older, could not refrain at times from yielding to the irresistible belief that her existence was enveloped in some mystery. Mystery too often presupposes the idea of guilt. Guilt! Who was guilty? Venetia shuddered at the current of her own thoughts. She started from the garden seat in which she had fallen into this dangerous and painful reverie; flew to her mother, who received her with smiles; and buried her face in the bosom of Lady Annabel.

CHAPTER II.

We have indicated in a few pages the progress of three years. How differently passed to the two preceding ones, when the Cadurcis family were settled at the abbey! For during this latter period it seemed that not a single incident had occurred. They had glided away in one unbroken course of study, religion, and domestic love, the enjoyment of nature, and the pursuits of charity; like a long summer sabbath-day, sweet and serene and still, undisturbed by a single passion, hallowed and hallowing.

If the Cadurcis family were now not absolutely forgotten at Cherbury, they were at least

only occasionally remembered. These last three years so completely harmonised with the life of Venetia before their arrival, that, taking a general view of her existence, their residence at the abbey figured only as an episode in her career; active indeed and stirring, and one that had left some impressions not easily discarded; but, on the whole, mellowed by the magic of time, Venetia looked back to her youthful friendship as an event that was only an exception in her lot, and she viewed herself as a being born and bred up in a seclusion which she was never to quit, with no aspirations beyond the little world in which she moved, and where she was to die in peace, as she had lived in purity.

One Sunday, the conversation after dinner fell upon Lord Cadurcis. Doctor Masham had recently met a young Etonian, and had made some inquiries about their friend of old days. The information he had obtained was not very satisfactory. It seemed that Cadurcis was a

more popular boy with his companions than his tutors; he had been rather unruly, and had only escaped expulsion by the influence of his guardian, who was not only a great noble, but a powerful minister.

This conversation recalled old times. They talked over the arrival of Mrs. Cadurcis at the abbey, her strange character, her untimely end. Lady Annabel expressed her conviction of the natural excellence of Plantagenet's disposition, and her regret of the many disadvantages under which he laboured; it gratified Venetia to listen to his praise.

"He has quite forgotten us, mamma," said Venetia.

"My love, he was very young when he quitted us," replied Lady Annabel; "and you must remember the influence of a change of life at so tender an age. He lives now in a busy world."

"I wish that he had not forgotten to write to us sometimes," said Venetia.

"Writing a letter is a great achievement for

a schoolboy," said the Doctor; "it is a duty which even grown-up persons too often forget to fulfil, and, when postponed, it is generally deferred for ever. However, I agree with Lady Annabel, Cadurcis was a fine fellow, and, had he been properly brought up, I cannot help thinking might have turned out something."

"Poor Plantagenet!" said Venetia, "how I pity him. His was a terrible lot—to lose both his parents! Whatever were the errors of Mrs. Cadurcis, she was his mother, and, in spite of every mortification, he clung to her. Ah! I shall never forget when Pauncefort met him coming out of her room, the night before the burial, when he said, with streaming eyes, 'I only had one friend in the world, and now she is gone.' I could not love Mrs. Cadurcis, and yet, when I heard of these words, I cried as much as he."

"Poor fellow!" said the Doctor, filling his glass.

"If there be any person in the world whom I

pity," said Venetia, "'tis an orphan. Oh! what should I be without mamma? And Plangenet, poor Plantagenet, he has no mother, no father." Venetia added, with a faltering voice: "I can sympathise with him in some degree, I, I, I know, I feel the misfortune, the misery,—" her face became crimson, yet she could not restrain the irresistible words,—"the misery of never having known a father," she added.

There was a dead pause, a most solemn silence. In vain Venetia struggled to look calm and unconcerned; every instant she felt the blood mantling in her cheek with a more lively and spreading agitation. She dared not look up; it was not possible to utter a word to turn the conversation. She felt utterly confounded, and absolutely mute. At length Lady Annabel spoke. Her tone was severe and choking, very different to her usual silvery voice.

"I am sorry that my daughter should feel so keenly the want of a parent's love," said her ladyship.

What would not Venetia have given for the power of speech? but it seemed to have deserted her for ever. There she sat mute and motionless, with her eyes fixed on the table, and with a burning cheek, as if she were conscious of having committed some act of shame, as if she had been detected in some base and degrading deed. Yet, what had she done? A daughter had delicately alluded to her grief at the loss of a parent, and expressed her keen sense of the deprivation.

It was an autumnal afternoon: Doctor Masham looked at the sky, and, after a long pause, made an observation about the weather, and then requested permission to order his horses, as the evening came on apace, and he had some distance to ride. Lady Annabel rose; the Doctor, with a countenance unusually serious, offered her his arm; and Venetia followed them like a criminal. In a few minutes the horses appeared; Lady Annabel bid adieu to her friend in her usual kind tone, and with her usual sweet smile;

and then, without noticing Venetia, instantly retired to her own chamber.

And this was her mother—her mother, who never before quitted her for an instant, without some sign and symbol of affection, some playful word of love, a winning smile, a passing embrace, that seemed to acknowledge that the pang of even momentary separation could only be alleviated by this graceful homage to the heart. —What had she done? Venetia was about to follow Lady Annabel, but she checked herself. Agony at having offended her mother, and for the first time, was blended with a strange curiosity as to the cause, and some hesitating indignation at her treatment. Venetia remained anxiously awaiting the return of Lady Annabel, but her ladyship did not reappear. Every instant the astonishment and the grief of Venetia increased. It was the first domestic difference that had occurred between them. It shocked her very much. She thought of Plantagenet and Mrs. Cadurcis. There was a mortifying resemblance,

however slight, between the respective situations of the two families. Venetia, too, had quarrelled with her mother; that mother who, for fourteen years, had only looked upon her with fondness and joy; who had been ever kind, without being ever weak, and had rendered her child happy by making her good; that mother, whose beneficent wisdom had transformed duty into delight; that superior yet gentle being, so indulgent yet so just, so gifted yet so condescending, who dedicated all her knowledge, and time, and care, and intellect to her daughter.

Venetia threw herself upon a couch and wept. They were the first tears of unmixed pain that she had ever shed. It was said by the household of Venetia when a child, that she had never cried; not a single tear had ever sullied that sunny face. Surrounded by scenes of innocence, and images of happiness and content, Venetia smiled on a world that smiled on her, the radiant heroine of a golden age. She had, indeed, wept over the sorrows and the departure of Ca-

durcis; but those were soft showers of sympathy and affection sent from a warm heart, like drops from a summer sky. But now this grief was agony: her brow throbbed, her hand was clenched, her heart beat with tumultuous palpitation; the streaming torrent came scalding down her cheek like fire rather than tears, and, instead of assuaging her emotion, seemed, on the contrary, to increase its fierce and fervid power.

The sun had set, the red autumnal twilight had died away, the shadows of night were brooding over the halls of Cherbury. The moan of the rising wind might be distinctly heard, and ever and anon the branches of neighbouring trees swung with a sudden yet melancholy sound against the windows of the apartment, of which the curtains had remained undrawn. Venetia looked up; the room would have been in perfect darkness but for a glimmer which just indicated the site of the expiring fire, and an un-

certain light, or rather modified darkness, that seemed the sky. Alone and desolate! Alone and desolate and unhappy! Alone and desolate and unhappy, and for the first time! Was it a sigh, or a groan, that issued from the stifling heart of Venetia Herbert? That child of innocence, that bright emanation of love and beauty, that airy creature of grace and gentleness, who had never said an unkind word or done an unkind thing in her whole career, but had glanced and glided through existence, scattering happiness and joy, and receiving the pleasure which she herself imparted, how overwhelming was her first struggle with that dark stranger—Sorrow!

Some one entered the room; it was Mistress Pauncefort. She held a taper in her hand, and came tripping gingerly in, with a new cap streaming with ribands, and scarcely, as it were, condescending to execute the mission with which she was intrusted, which was no greater than

fetching her lady's reticule. She glanced at the table, but it was not there; and she turned up her nose at a chair or two, which she even condescended to propel a little with a saucy foot, as if the reticule might be hid under the hanging drapery, and then, unable to find the object of her search, Mistress Pauncefort settled herself before the glass, elevating the taper above her head, that she might observe what indeed she had been examining the whole day, the effect of her new cap. With a complacent simper, Mistress Pauncefort then turned from pleasure to business, and, approaching the couch, gave a faint shriek, half genuine, half affected, as she recognised the recumbent form of her young mistress. "Well, to be sure," exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort, "was the like ever seen! Miss Venetia, as I live! La! Miss Venetia, what can be the matter? I declare I am all of a palpitation."

Venetia, affecting composure, said she was

rather unwell; that she had a headache, and rising, murmured that she would go to bed. "A headache!" exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort, "I hope no worse, for there is my lady, and she is as out of sorts as possible. She has a headache too; and when I shut the door just now, I am sure as quiet as a lamb, she told me not to make so much noise when I left the room. 'Noise!' says I; 'why really, my lady, I don't pretend to be a spirit; but if it comes to noise—' 'Never answer me, Pauncefort,' says my lady. 'No, my lady,' says I, 'I never do, and, I am sure, when I have a headache myself, I don't like to be answered.' But, to be sure, if you have a headache, and my lady has a headache too. I only hope we have not got the epidemy. I vow, Miss Venetia, that your eyes are as red as if you had been running against the wind. Well, to be sure, if you have not been crying! I must go and tell my lady immediately."

"Light me to my room," said Venetia;

"I will not disturb my mother, as she is unwell."

Venetia rose, and Mistress Pauncefort followed her to her chamber, and lit her candles. Venetia desired her not to remain; and when she had quitted the chamber, Venetia threw herself in her chair and sighed.

To sleep—it was impossible; it seemed to Venetia that she could never rest again. She wept no more, but her distress was very great. She felt it impossible to exist through the night without being reconciled to her mother; but she refrained from going to her room, from the fear of again meeting her troublesome attendant. She resolved, therefore, to wait until she heard Mistress Pauncefort retire for the night, and she listened with restless anxiety for the sign of her departure in the sound of her footsteps along the vestibule, on which the doors of Lady Annabel's and her daughter's apartments opened.

An hour elapsed, and at length the sound was heard. Convinced that Pauncefort had now

quitted her mother for the night, Venetia ventured forth; and, stopping before the door of her mother's room, she knocked gently. There was no reply, and in a few minutes Venetia knocked again, and rather louder. Still no answer. "Mamma," said Venetia in a faltering tone, but no sound replied. Venetia then tried the door, and found it fastened. Then she gave up the effort in despair, and, retreating to her own chamber, she threw herself on her bed, and wept bitterly.

Some time elapsed before she looked up again; the candles were flaring in their sockets. It was a wild windy night; Venetia rose, and withdrew the curtain of her window. The black clouds were scudding along the sky, revealing, in their occasional but transient rifts, some glimpses of the moon, that seemed unusually bright; or of a star, that trembled with supernatural brilliancy. She stood a while gazing on the outward scene, that harmonized with her own internal agitation: her grief was like the

storm, her love like the light of that bright moon and star. There came over her a desire to see her mother, which she felt irresistible; she was resolved that no difficulty, no impediment, should prevent her instantly from throwing herself on her bosom. It seemed to her that her brain would burn, that this awful night could never end without such an interview. She opened her door, went forth again into the vestibule, and approached with a nervous but desperate step her mother's chamber. To her astonishment, the door was ajar, but there was a light within. With trembling step and downcast eyes, Venetia entered the chamber, scarcely daring to advance, or to look up.

"Mother," she said, but no one answered; she heard the tick of the clock; it was the only sound. "Mother," she repeated, and she dared to look up, but the bed was empty. There was no mother. Lady Annabel was not in the room. Following an irresistible impulse, Venetia knelt by the side of her mother's bed and prayed. She

addressed, in audible and agitated tones, that Almighty and Beneficent Being of whom she was so faithful and pure a follower. With sanctified simplicity, she communicated to her Creator and her Saviour all her distress, all her sorrow, all the agony of her perplexed and wounded spirit. If she had sinned, she prayed for forgiveness, and declared in solitude, to one whom she could not deceive, how unintentional was the trespass; if she were only misapprehended, she supplicated for comfort and consolation; for support under the heaviest visitation she had yet experienced, the displeasure of that earthly parent whom she revered only second to her heavenly Father.

"For thou art my Father," said Venetia, "I have no other father but thee, O God! Forgive me, then, my heavenly parent, if in my wilfulness, if in my thoughtless and sinful blindness, I have sighed for a father on earth, as well as in heaven! Great have thy mercies been to me, O God! in a mother's love. Turn, then, again

to me the heart of that mother whom I have offended! Let her look upon her child as before; let her continue to me a double parent, and let me pay to her the duty and the devotion that might otherwise have been divided!"

"Amen!" said a sweet and solemn voice, and Venetia was clasped in her mother's arms.

CHAPTER III.

If the love of Lady Annabel for her child were capable of increase, it might have been believed that it absolutely became more profound and ardent after that short-lived but painful estrangement, which we have related in the last chapter. With all Lady Annabel's fascinating qualities and noble virtues, a fine observer of human nature enjoying opportunities of intimately studying her character, might have suspected that an occasion only were wanted to display or develop in that lady's conduct no trifling evidence of a haughty, proud, and even inexorable, spirit. Circumstanced as she was

at Cherbury, with no one capable or desirous of disputing her will, the more gracious and exalted qualities of her nature were alone apparent. Entertaining a severe, even a sublime sense of the paramount claims of duty in all conditions and circumstances of life, her own conduct afforded an invariable and consistent example of her tenet; from those around her she required little, and that was cheerfully granted; while on the other hand, her more eminent situation alike multiplied her own obligations, and enabled her to fulfil them; she appeared, therefore, to pass her life in conferring happiness and in receiving gratitude. Strictly religious, of immaculate reputation, rigidly just, systematically charitable, dignified in her manners, yet more than courteous to her inferiors, and gifted at the same time with great self-control and great decision, she was looked up to by all within her sphere with a sentiment of affectionate veneration. Perhaps there was only one person within her little world who, both by disposition and relative situation,

was qualified in any way to question her undoubted sway, or to cross by independence of opinion the tenour of the discipline she had established, and this was her child. Venetia, with one of the most affectionate and benevolent natures in the world, was gifted with a shrewd inquiring mind, and a restless imagination. She was capable of forming her own opinions, and had both reason and feeling at command to gauge their worth. But to gain an influence over this child had been the sole object of Lady Annabel's life, and she had hitherto met that success which usually awaits in this world the strong purpose of a determined spirit. Lady Annabel herself was far too acute a person not to have detected early in life the talents of her child, and she was proud of them. She had cultivated them with exemplary devotion, and with admirable profit. But Lady Annabel had not less discovered that, in the ardent and susceptible temperament of Venetia, means were offered by which the heart might be trained not

only to cope with but overpower the intellect. With great powers of pleasing, beauty, accomplishments, a sweet voice, a soft manner, a sympathetic heart, Lady Annabel was qualified to charm the world; she had contrived to fascinate her daughter. She had inspired Venetia with the most romantic attachment for her: such as rather subsists between two female friends of the same age and hearts, than between individuals in the relative situations which they bore to each other. Yet while Venetia thus loved her mother, she could not but also respect and revere the superior being whose knowledge was her guide on all subjects, and whose various accomplishments deprived her secluded education of all its disadvantages; and when she felt that one so gifted had devoted her life to the benefit of her child, and that this beautiful and peerless lady had no other ambition but to be her guardian and attendant spirit; gratitude, fervent and profound, mingled with admiring reverence and passionate affection, and together

formed a spell that encircled the mind of Venetia with talismanic sway.

Under the despotic influence of these enchanted feelings, Venetia was fast growing into womanhood, without a single cloud having ever disturbed or sullied the pure and splendid heaven of her domestic life. Suddenly the horizon had become clouded, a storm had gathered and burst, and an eclipse could scarcely have occasioned more terror to the untutored roamer of the wilderness, than this unexpected catastrophe to one so inexperienced in the power of the passions as our heroine. Her heaven was again serene; but, such was the effect of this ebullition on her character, so keen was her dread of again encountering the agony of another misunderstanding with her mother, that she recoiled with trembling from that subject which had so often and so deeply engaged her secret thoughts; and the idea of her father, associated as it now was with pain, mortification, and misery, never rose to her imagination but instantly to be shunned as some

unhallowed image, of which the bitter contemplation was fraught with not less disastrous consequences than the denounced idolatry of the holy people.

Whatever, therefore, might be the secret reasons which impelled Lady Annabel to shroud the memory of the lost parent of her child in such inviolate gloom, it is certain that the hitherto restless though concealed curiosity of Venetia upon the subject, the rash demonstration to which it led, and the consequence of her boldness, instead of threatening to destroy in an instant the deep and matured system of her mother, had, on the whole, greatly contributed to the fulfilment of the very purpose for which Lady Annabel had so long laboured. That lady spared no pains in following up the advantage which her acuteness and knowledge of her daughter's character assured her that she had secured. She hovered round her child more like an enamoured lover than a fond mother; she hung upon her looks, she read her thoughts,

she anticipated every want and wish; her dulcet tones seemed even sweeter than before; her soft and elegant manners even more tender and refined. Though even in her childhood Lady Annabel had rather guided than commanded Venetia; now she rather consulted than guided her. She seized advantage of the advanced character and mature appearance of Venetia to treat her as a woman rather than a child, and as a friend rather than a daughter. Venetia yielded herself up to this flattering and fascinating condescension. Her love for her mother amounted to passion; she had no other earthly object or desire but to pass her entire life in her sole and sweet society; she could conceive no sympathy deeper or more delightful; the only unhappiness she had ever known, had been occasioned by a moment trenching upon its exclusive privilege; Venetia could not picture to herself that such a pure and entrancing existence could ever experience a change.

And this mother, this devoted yet mysterious mother, jealous of her child's regret for a father that she had lost, and whom she had never known! shall we ever penetrate the secret of her heart?

CHAPTER IV.

It was in the enjoyment of these exquisite feelings that a year, and more than another year, elapsed at our lone hall of Cherbury. Happiness and content seemed at least the blessed destiny of the Herberts. Venetia grew in years, and grace, and loveliness; each day, apparently more her mother's joy, and each day bound to that mother by, if possible, more ardent love. She had never again experienced those uneasy thoughts which at times had haunted her from her infancy; separated from her mother, indeed, scarcely for an hour together, she had no time to muse. Her studies, each day becoming more various and interesting, and pursued with so

gifted and charming a companion, entirely engrossed her; even the exercise that was her relaxation was participated by Lady Annabel; and the mother and daughter, bounding together on their steeds, were fanned by the same breeze, and freshened by the same graceful and healthy exertion.

One day the post, that seldom arrived at Cherbury, brought a letter to Lady Annabel, the perusal of which evidently greatly agitated her. Her countenance changed as her eye glanced over the pages; her hand trembled as she held it. But she made no remark; and succeeded in subduing her emotion so quickly, that Venetia, although she watched her mother with anxiety, did not feel justified in interfering with inquiring sympathy. But while Lady Annabel resumed her usual calm demeanour, she relapsed into unaccustomed silence, and, soon rising from the breakfast table, moved to the window, and continued apparently gazing on the garden, with her face averted from Venetia for some time.

At length she turned to her, and said, "I think, Venetia, of calling on the Doctor to-day; there is business on which I wish to consult him, but I will not trouble you, dearest, to accompany me. I must take the carriage, and it is a long and tiring drive."

There was a tone of decision even in the slightest observations of Lady Annabel, which, however sweet might be the voice in which they were uttered, scarcely encouraged their propriety to be canvassed. Now, Venetia was far from desirous of being separated from her mother this morning. It was not a vain and idle curiosity prompted by the receipt of the letter and its consequent effects, both in the emotion of her mother and the visit which it had rendered necessary, that swayed her breast. The native dignity of a well-disciplined mind exempted Venetia from such feminine weakness. But some consideration might be due to the quick sympathy of an affectionate spirit that had witnessed, with corresponding feeling, the dis-

turbance of the being to whom she was devoted. Why this occasional and painful mystery that ever and anon clouded the heaven of their love, and flung a frigid shadow over the path of a sunshiny life? Why was not Venetia to share the sorrow or the care of her only friend, as well as participate in her joy and her content? There were other claims, too, to this confidence, besides those of the heart. Lady Annabel was not merely her only friend, she was her parent, her only parent, almost, for aught she had ever heard or learnt, her only relative. For her mother's family, though she was aware of their existence by the freedom with which Lady Annabel ever mentioned them, and though Venetia was conscious that an occasional correspondence was maintained between them and Cherbury, occupied no station in Venetia's heart, scarcely in her memory. That noble family were nullities to her; far distant, apparently estranged from her hearth, except in form, she had never seen them; they were associated in her recollec-

tion with none of the sweet ties of kindred. Her grandfather was dead without her ever having received his blessing; his successor, her uncle, was an ambassador, long absent from his country; her only aunt married to a soldier, and established at a foreign station. Venetia envied Dr. Masham the confidence which was extended to him; it seemed to her, even leaving out of sight the intimate feelings that subsisted between her and her mother, that the claims of blood to this confidence, were at least as strong as those of friendship. But Venetia stifled their emotions; she parted from her mother with a kind, yet somewhat mournful, expression. Lady Annabel might have read a slight sentiment of affectionate reproach in the demeanour of her daughter when she bade her farewell. Whatever might be the consciousness of the mother, she was successful in concealing her impression. Very kind, but calm and inscrutable, Lady Annabel, having given directions for postponing the dinner-hour, embraced her child and entered the chariot.

Venetia, from the terrace, watched her mother's progress through the park. After gazing for some minutes, a tear stole down her cheek. She started, as if surprised at her own emotion. And now the carriage was out of sight, and Venetia would have recurred to some of those resources which were ever at hand for the employment or amusement of her secluded life. But the favourite volume ceased to interest this morning, and almost fell from her hand. She tried her spinet, but her ear seemed to have lost its music; she looked at her easel, but the cunning had fled from her touch.

Restless and disquieted, she knew not why, Venetia went forth again into the garden. All nature smiled around her; the flitting birds were throwing their soft shadows over the sunny lawns, and rustling amid the blossoms of the variegated groves. The golden wreaths of the laburnum and the silver knots of the chestnut streamed and glittered around; the bees were as busy as the birds, and the whole scene was

suffused and penetrated with brilliancy and odour. It still was spring, and yet the gorgeous approach of summer, like the advancing procession of some triumphant king, might almost be detected amid the lingering freshness of the year; a lively and yet magnificent period, blending, as it were, Attic grace with Roman splendour; a time when hope and fruition for once meet, when existence is most full of delight, alike delicate and voluptuous, and when the human frame is most sensible to the gaiety and grandeur of nature.

And why was not the spirit of the beautiful and innocent Venetia as bright as the surrounding scene? There are moods of mind that baffle analysis, that arise from a mysterious sympathy we cannot penetrate. At this moment the idea of her father irresistibly recurred to the imagination of Venetia. She could not withstand the conviction that the receipt of the mysterious letter and her mother's agitation were by some inexplicable connection linked

with that forbidden subject. Strange incidents of her life flitted across her memory: her mother weeping on the day they visited Marringhurst, the mysterious chambers—the nocturnal visit of Lady Annabel that Cadurcis had witnessed—her unexpected absence from her apartment, when Venetia in her despair had visited her, some months ago. What was the secret that enveloped her existence? Alone, which was unusual—dispirited, she knew not why—and brooding over thoughts which haunted her like evil spirits, Venetia at length yielded to a degree of nervous excitement which amazed her. She looked up to the uninhabited wing of the mansion with an almost fierce desire to penetrate its mysteries. It seemed to her that a strange voice came whispering on the breeze, urging her to the fulfilment of a mystical mission. With a vague, yet wild purpose, she entered the house, and took her way to her mother's chamber. Mistress Pauncefort was there. Venetia endeavoured to assume her accustomed serenity. The waiting-

woman bustled about, arranging the toilet-table, which had been for a moment discomposed, putting away a cap, folding up a shawl, and indulging in a multitude of inane observations which little harmonised with the high-strung tension of Venetia's mind. Mistress Pauncefort opened a casket with a spring lock, in which she placed some trinkets of her mistress. Venetia stood by her in silence; her eye, vacant and wandering, beheld the interior of the casket. There must have been something in it, the sight of which greatly agitated her, for Venetia turned pale, and in a moment left the chamber and retired to her own room.

She locked her door, threw herself in a chair; almost gasping for breath, she covered her face with her hands. It was some minutes before she recovered comparative composure; she rose and looked in the mirror; her face was quite white, but her eyes glittering with excitement. She walked up and down her room with a troubled step, and a scarlet flush alternately

returned to and retired from her changing cheek. Then she leaned against a cabinet in thought. She was disturbed from her musings by the sound of Pauncefort's step along the vestibule, as she quitted her mother's chamber. In a few minutes Venetia herself stepped forth into the vestibule, and listened. All was silent, The golden morning had summoned the whole household to its enjoyment. Not a voice, not a domestic sound, broke the complete stillness. Venetia again repaired to the apartment of Lady Annabel. Her step was light, but agitated; it seemed that she scarcely dared to breathe. She opened the door, rushed to the cabinet, pressed the spring lock, caught at something that it contained, and hurried again to her own chamber.

And what is this prize that the trembling Venetia holds almost convulsively in her grasp, apparently without daring even to examine it? Is this the serene and light-hearted girl, whose face was like the cloudless splendour of a sunny

day? Why is she so pallid and perturbed? What strong impulse fills her frame? She clutches in her hand a key!

On that tempestuous night of passionate sorrow which succeeded the first misunderstanding between Venetia and her mother, when the voice of Lady Annabel had suddenly blended with that of her kneeling child, and had ratified with her devotional concurrence her wailing supplications; even at the moment when Venetia, in a rapture of love and duty, felt herself pressed to her mother's reconciled heart, it had not escaped her that Lady Annabel held in her hand a key; and, though the feelings which that night had so forcibly developed, and which the subsequent conduct of Lady Annabel had so carefully and skilfully cherished, had impelled Venetia to banish and erase from her thought and memory all the associations which that spectacle however slight was calculated to awaken, still, in her present mood, the unexpected vision of the same instrument, identical she could not doubt, had

triumphed in an instant over all the long discipline of her mind and conduct, in an instant had baffled and dispersed her self-control, and been hailed as the providential means by which she might at length penetrate that mystery which she now felt no longer supportable.

The clock of the belfry of Cherbury at this moment struck, and Venetia instantly sprang from her seat. It reminded her of the preciousness of the present morning. Her mother was indeed absent, but her mother would return. Before that event a great fulfilment was to occur. Venetia, still grasping the key, as if it were the talisman of her existence, looked up to Heaven, as if she required for her allotted task an immediate and special protection; her lips seemed to move, and then she again quitted her apartment. As she passed through an oriel in her way towards the gallery, she observed Pauncefort in the avenue of the park, moving in the direction of the keeper's lodge. This emboldened her. With a hurried step she advanced along the

gallery, and at length stood before the long-sealed door that had so often excited her strange curiosity. Once she looked around; but no one was near, not a sound was heard. With a faltering hand she touched the lock with the key; but her powers deserted her: for a minute she believed that the key after all would not solve the mystery. And yet the difficulty arose only from her own agitation. She rallied her courage; once more she made the trial; the key fitted with completeness, and the lock opened with ease, and Venetia found herself in a small and scantily-furnished antechamber. Withdrawing then the key from the lock, and closing the door with noiseless care, Venetia stood trembling in the mysterious chamber, where apparently there was nothing to excite wonder. The door of the chamber into which the anteroom opened was still closed, and it was some minutes before the adventurous daughter of Lady Annabel could summon courage for the enterprise which awaited her.

Her hand is upon the lock; it yields without an effort. Venetia steps into a spacious and lofty chamber. For a moment she paused almost upon the threshold, and looked around her with a vague and misty vision. Anon she distinguished something of the character of the apartment. In the recess of a large oriel window, that looked upon the park, and of which the blinds were nearly drawn, was an old-fashioned yet sumptuous toilet-table of considerable size, arranged as if for use. Opposite this window, in a corresponding recess, was what might be deemed a bridal bed, its furniture being of white satin, richly embroidered; the curtains half closed; and suspended from the canopy was a wreath of roses, that had once emulated, or rather excelled, the lustrous purity of the hangings, but now were wan and withered. The centre of the inlaid and polished floor of the apartment was covered with a Tournay carpet, of brilliant, yet tasteful, decoration. An old cabinet of fanciful workmanship, some chairs of ebony, and some

girandoles of silver, completed the furniture of the room, save that at its extreme end, exactly opposite to the door by which Venetia entered, covered with a curtain of green silk, was what she concluded must be a picture.

An awful stillness pervaded the apartment: Venetia herself, with a face paler even than the hangings of the mysterious bed, stood motionless with suppressed breath, gazing on the distant curtain, with a painful glance of agitated fascination. At length, summoning her energies as if for the achievement of some terrible yet inevitable enterprise, she crossed the room, and averting her face, and closing her eyes in a paroxysm of nervous excitement, she stretched forth her arm, and with a rapid motion withdrew the curtain. The harsh sound of the brass rings drawn quickly over the rod, the only noise that had yet met her ear in this mystical chamber, made her start and tremble. She looked up—she beheld, in a very broad and massy frame, the full-length portrait of a man.

A man in the very spring of sunny youth, and of radiant beauty. Above the middle height, and very slender, yet with a form that displayed exquisite grace, he was habited in a green tunic that developed his figure to advantage, and became the scene in which he was placed—a park, with a castle in the distance; while a groom at hand held a noble steed, that seemed impatient for the chase. The countenance of its intended rider met fully the gaze of the spectator. It was a countenance of singular loveliness and power. The lips and the moulding of the chin resembled the eager and impassioned tenderness of the shape of Antinous; but, instead of the effeminate sullenness of the eye, and the narrow smoothness of the forehead, shone an expression of profound and piercing thought. On each side of the clear and open brow descended, even to the shoulders, the clustering locks of golden hair; while the eyes large, and yet deep, beamed with a spiritual energy, and shone like two wells

of crystalline water that reflect the all-beholding heavens.

Now when Venetia Herbert beheld this countenance a change came over her. It seemed that, when her eyes met the eyes of the portrait, some mutual interchange of sympathy occurred between them. She freed herself in an instant from the apprehension and timidity that before oppressed her. Whatever might ensue, a vague conviction of having achieved a great object pervaded, as it were, her being. Some great end, vast, though indefinite, had been fulfilled. Abstract and fearless, she gazed upon the dazzling visage with a prophetic heart. Her soul was in a tumult, oppressed with thick-coming fancies too big for words, panting for expression. There was a word which must be spoken: it trembled on her convulsive lip, and would not sound. She looked around her with an eye glittering with unnatural fire, as if to supplicate some invisible and hovering spirit to her rescue

or that some floating and angelic chorus might warble the thrilling word, whose expression seemed absolutely necessary to her existence. Her cheek is flushed, her eye wild and tremulous, the broad blue veins of her immaculate brow quivering and distended; her waving hair falls back over her forehead, and rustles like a wood before the storm. She seems a priestess in the convulsive throes of inspiration, and about to breathe the oracle.

The picture, as we have mentioned, was hung in a broad and massy frame. In the centre of its base was worked an escutcheon, and beneath the shield this inscription,—

MARMION HERBERT, ÆT. XX.

Yet there needed not these letters to guide the agitated spirit of Venetia, for, before her eye had reached them, the word was spoken; and, falling on her knees before the portrait, the daughter of Lady Annabel had exclaimed "My father!"

CHAPTER V.

The daughter still kneels before the form of the father, of whom she had heard for the first time in her life. He is at length discovered. It was, then, an irresistible destiny, that, after the wild musings and baffled aspirations of so many years, had guided her to this chamber. She is the child of Marmion Herbert; she beholds her lost parent. That being of supernatural beauty, on whom she gazes with a look of blended reverence and love, is her father. What a revelation! Its reality exceeded the wildest dreams of her romance; her brightest visions of grace and loveliness and genius, seemed personified in this form; the form of one

to whom she was bound by the strongest of all earthly ties—of one on whose heart she had a claim second only to that of the being by whose lips his name was never mentioned. Was he, then, no more? Ah! could she doubt that bitterest calamity? Ah! was it, was it any longer a marvel, that one who had lived in the light of those seraphic eyes, and had watched them until their terrestrial spendour had been for ever extinguished, should shrink from the converse that could remind her of the catastrophe of all her earthly hopes! This chamber, then, was the temple of her mother's woe—the tomb of her baffled affections and bleeding heart. No wonder that Lady Annabel, the desolate Lady Annabel, that almost the same spring must have witnessed the most favoured and the most disconsolate of women, should have fled from the world, that had awarded her at the same time a lot so dazzling and so full of despair. Venetia felt that the existence of her mother's child, her own fragile being, could have been that mother's

sole link to life. The heart of the young widow of Marmion Herbert must have broken but for Venetia; and the consciousness of that remaining tie, and the duties that it involved, could have alone sustained the victim under a lot of such unparalleled bitterness. The tears streamed down her cheek as she thought of her mother's misery, and her mother's gentle love; the misery that she had been so cautious her child should never share; the vigilant affection that, with all her own hopes blighted, had still laboured to compensate to her child for a deprivation, the fullness of which Venetia could only now comprehend.

When, where, why—did he die? Oh! that she might talk of him to her mother for ever! It seemed that life might pass away in listening to his praises. Marmion Herbert!—and who was Marmion Herbert? Young as he was, command and genius, the pride of noble passions, all the glory of a creative mind, seemed stamped upon his brow. With all his marvellous beauty,

he seemed a being born for greatness. Dead—in the very burst of his spring, a spring so sweet and splendid—could he be dead? Why, then, was he ever born? It seemed to her that he could not be dead; there was an animated look about the form, that seemed as if it could not die without leaving mankind a prodigal legacy of fame.

Venetia turned and looked upon her parents' bridal bed. Now that she had discovered her father's portrait, every article in the room interested her, for her imagination connected everything with him. She touched the wreath of withered roses, and one instantly broke away from the circle, and fell; she knelt down and gathered up the scattered leaves, and placed them in her bosom. She approached the table in the oriel: in its centre was a volume, on which reposed a dagger of curious workmanship; the volume bound in velvet, and the word "ANNABEL" embroidered upon it in gold. Venetia unclasped it. The volume was MS.; in a fly-leaf were written these words—

"TO THE LADY OF MY LOVE, FROM HER MARMION HERBERT."

With a fluttering heart, yet sparkling eye, Venetia sank into a chair, which was placed before the table, with all her soul concentred in the contents of this volume. Leaning on her right hand, which shaded her agitated brow, she turned a page of the volume with a trembling hand. It contained a sonnet, delineating the feelings of a lover at the first sight of his beloved,—a being to him yet unknown. Venetia perused with breathless interest the graceful and passionate picture of her mother's beauty. A series of similar compositions detailed the history of the poet's heart, and all the thrilling adventures of his enchanted life. Not an incident, not a word, not a glance, in that spell-bound prime of existence, that was not commemorated by his lyre in strains as sweet and as witching! Now he poured forth his passion; now his doubts; now his hopes;

now came the glowing hour when he was first assured of his felicity; the next page celebrated her visit to the castle of his fathers; and another led her to the altar.

With a flushed cheek and an excited eye, Venetia had rapidly pored over these ardent annals of the heart from whose blood she had sprung. She turns the page—she starts—the colour deserts her countenance—a mist glides over her vision—she clasps her hands with convulsive energy—she sinks back in her chair. In a few moments she extends one hand, as if fearful again to touch the book that had excited so much emotion—raises herself in her seat—looks around her with a vacant and perplexed gaze—apparently succeeds in collecting herself—and then seizes, with an eager grasp, the volume, and throwing herself on her knees before the chair—her long locks hanging on each side over a cheek crimson as the sunset—loses her whole soul in the lines which the next page reveals.

ON THE NIGHT OUR DAUGHTER WAS BORN.

I.

Within our heaven of love, the new-born star
We long devoutly watched, like shepherd kings,
Steals into light, and, floating from afar,
Methinks some bright transcendent seraph sings,
Waving with flashing light her radiant wings,
Immortal welcome to the stranger fair:
To us a child is born. With transport clings
The mother to the babe she sighed to bear;
Of all our treasured loves, the long-expected heir!

II.

My daughter! can it be a daughter now
Shall greet my being with her infant smile?
And shall I press that fair and taintless brow
With my fond lips, and tempt, with many a wile
Of playful love, those features to beguile
A parent with their mirth? In the wild sea
Of this dark life, behold a little isle
Rises amid the waters, bright and free,
A haven for my hopes of fond security!

III.

And thou shalt bear a name my line has loved,
And their fair daughters owned for many an age,
Since first our fiery blood a wanderer roved,
And made in sunnier lands his pilgrimage,
Where proud defiance with the waters wage
The sea-born city's walls; the graceful towers
Loved by the bard and honoured by the sage!
My own VENETIA now shall gild our bowers,
And with her spell enchain our life's enchanted hours!

IV.

Oh! if the blessing of a father's heart
Hath aught of sacred in its deep-breath'd prayer,
Skilled to thy gentle being to impart,
As thy bright form itself, a fate as fair;
On thee I breathe that blessing! Let me share,
O God! her joys; and if the dark behest
Of woe resistless, and avoidless care,
Hath not gone forth, oh! spare this gentle guest,
And wreak thy needful wrath on my resigned breast!

An hour elapsed, and Venetia did not move. Over and over again she conned the only address from the lips of her father that had ever reached her ear. A strange inspiration seconded the exertion of an exercised memory. The duty was fulfilled—the task completed. Then a sound was heard without. The thought that her mother had returned occurred to her; she looked up, the big tears streaming down her face; she listened, like a young hind just roused by the still-distant huntsman, quivering and wild;—she listened, and she sprang up—replaced the volume—arranged the chair—cast one long, lingering, feverish glance at the portrait—skimmed through the room—hesitated one moment in the antechamber—opened, as all was silent, the no longer mysterious door—turned the noiseless lock—tripped lightly along the vestibule—glided into her mother's empty apartment—reposited the key that had opened so many wonders in the casket,—and then, having

hurried to her own chamber, threw herself on her bed in a paroxysm of contending emotions, that left her no power of pondering over the strange discovery that had already given a new colour to her existence.

CHAPTER VI.

Her mother had not returned; it was a false alarm; but Venetia could not quit her bed. There she remained, repeating to herself her father's verses. Then one thought alone filled her being. Was he dead? Was this fond father, who had breathed this fervent blessing over her birth, and invoked on his own head all the woe and misfortunes of her destiny, was he, indeed, no more? How swiftly must the arrow have sped after he received the announcement that a child was given to him—

"Of all his treasured loves the long-expected heir!"

He could scarcely have embraced her ere the great Being, to whom he had offered his prayer,

summoned him to his presence! Of that father she had not the slightest recollection; she had ascertained that she had reached Cherbury a child, even in arms, and she knew that her father had never lived under the roof. What an awful bereavement! Was it wonderful that her mother was inconsolable? Was it wonderful that she could not endure even his name to be mentioned in her presence—that not the slightest allusion to his existence could be tolerated by a wife, who had been united to such a peerless being, only to behold him torn away from her embraces? Oh! could he, indeed, be dead! That inspired countenance that seemed immortal, had it in a moment been dimmed; and all the symmetry of that matchless form, had it indeed been long mouldering in the dust? Why should she doubt it? Ah! why, indeed? How could she doubt it? Why, ever and anon, amid the tumult of her excited mind, came there an unearthly whisper to her ear, mocking her with the belief that he still

lived? But he was dead; he must be dead; and why did she live? Could she survive what she had seen and learnt this day? Did she wish to survive it? But her mother, her mother with all her sealed-up sorrows, had survived him. Why? For her sake; for her child; for "his own Venetia!" His own!

She clenched her feverish hand—her temples beat with violent palpitations—her brow was burning hot. Time flew on, and every minute Venetia was more sensible of the impossibility of rising to welcome her mother. That mother at length returned; Venetia could not again mistake the wheels of the returning carriage. Some minutes passed, and there was a knock at her door. With a choking voice Venetia bade them enter. It was Pauncefort.

"Well, miss," she exclaimed, "if you ayn't here, after all! I told my lady, 'My lady,' says I, 'I am sure Miss Venetia must be in the park, for I saw her go out myself, and I have never seen her come home.' And, after all, you are here.

My lady has come home, you know, Miss, and has been inquiring for you several times."

"Tell mamma that I am not very well," said Venetia, in a low voice, "and that I have been obliged to lie down."

"Not well, Miss!" exclaimed Pauncefort; "and what can be the matter with you? I am afraid you have walked too much; overdone it, I dare say; or, mayhap, you have caught cold; it is an easterly wind; for I was saying to John this morning, 'John,' says I, 'if Miss Venetia will walk about with only a handkerchief tied round her head, why—what can be expected?'"

"I have only a headach, a very bad headach, Pauncefort; I wish to be quiet," said Venetia.

Pauncefort left the room accordingly, and straightway proceeded to Lady Annabel, when she communicated the information that Miss Venetia was in the house, after all, though she had never seen her return, and that she was lying down because she had a very bad headach. Lady Annabel, of course, did not lose a moment

in visiting her darling. She entered the room very softly, so softly that she was not heard; Venetia was lying on her bed, with her back to the door. Lady Annabel stood by her bedside for some moments unnoticed. At length Venetia heaved a deep sigh. Her mother then said, in a very soft voice, "Are you in pain, darling?"

"Is that mamma?" said Venetia, turning with quickness.

"You are ill, dear," said Lady Annabel, taking her hand. "Your hand is hot; you are feverish. How long has my Venetia felt ill?"

Venetia could not answer; she did nothing but sigh. Her strange manner excited her mother's wonder. Lady Annabel sat by the bedside, still holding her daughter's hand in hers, watching her with a glance of great anxiety.

"Answer me, my love," she repeated in a voice of tenderness. "What do you feel?"

"My head, my head," murmured Venetia.

Her mother pressed her own hand to her

daughter's brow ; it was very hot. " Does that pain you?" inquired Lady Annabel; but Venetia did not reply; her look was wild and abstracted. Her mother gently withdrew her hand, and then summoned Pauncefort, with whom she communicated without permitting her to enter the room.

" Miss Herbert is very ill," said Lady Annabel, pale, but in a firm tone. " I am alarmed about her. She appears to me to have a fever; send instantly to Southport for Mr. Hawkins; and let the messenger use and urge all possible expedition. Be in attendance in the vestibule, Pauncefort; I shall not quit her room, but she must be kept perfectly quiet."

Lady Annabel then drew her chair to the bedside of her daughter, and bathed her temples at intervals with rose-water; but none of these attentions apparently attracted the notice of the sufferer. She was, it would seem, utterly unconscious of all that was occurring. She now lay with her face turned towards her mother,

but did not exchange even looks with her. She was restless, and occasionally she sighed very deeply.

Once, by way of experiment, Lady Annabel again addressed her, but Venetia gave no answer. Then the mother concluded what, indeed, had before attracted her suspicion, that Venetia's head was affected. But, then, what was this strange, this sudden, attack, which appeared to have prostrated her daughter's faculties in an instant? A few hours back, and Lady Annabel had parted from Venetia in all the glow of health and beauty. The season was most genial; her exercise had doubtless been moderate; as for her general health, so complete was her constitution, and so calm the tenour of her life, that Venetia had scarcely experienced in her whole career a single hour of indisposition. It was an anxious period of suspense until the medical attendant arrived from Southport. Fortunately he was one in whom, from reputation, Lady Annabel was disposed to place great trust; and

his matured years, his thoughtful manner, and acute inquiries, confirmed her favourable opinion of him. All that Mr. Hawkins could say, however, was, that Miss Herbert had a great deal of fever, but the cause was concealed, and the suddenness of the attack perplexed him. He administered one of the usual remedies; and after an hour had elapsed, and no favourable change occurring, he blooded her. He quitted Cherbury, with the promise of returning late in the evening, having several patients whom he was obliged to visit.

The night drew on; the chamber was now quite closed, but Lady Annabel never quitted it. She sat reading, removed from her daughter, that her presence might not disturb her, for Venetia seemed inclined to sleep. Suddenly Venetia spoke; but she said only one word—"Father!"

Lady Annabel started—her book nearly fell from her hand—she grew very pale. Quite breathless, she listened, and again Venetia spoke,

and again called upon her father. Now, with a great effort, Lady Annabel stole on tiptoe to the bedside of her daughter. Venetia was lying on her back, her eyes were closed, her lips still, as it were, quivering with the strange word they had dared to pronounce. Again her voice sounded; she chanted, in an unearthly voice, verses. The perspiration stood in large drops on the pallid forehead of her mother as she listened. Still Venetia proceeded; and Lady Annabel, throwing herself on her knees, held up her hands to Heaven in an agony of astonishment, terror, and devotion.

Now there was again silence; but her mother remained apparently buried in prayer. Again Venetia spoke; again she repeated the mysterious stanzas. With convulsive agony her mother listened to every fatal line that she unconsciously pronounced.

The secret was then discovered. Yes! Venetia must have penetrated the long-closed chamber; all the labours of long years had in a

moment been subverted; Venetia had discovered her parent, and the effects of the discovery might, perhaps, be her death. Then it was that Lady Annabel, in the torture of her mind, poured forth her supplications that the life or the heart of her child might never be lost to her. "Grant, O merciful God!" she exclaimed, "that this sole hope of my being may be spared to me. Grant, if she be spared, that she may never desert her mother! And for him, of whom she has heard this day for the first time, let him be to her as if he were no more! May she never learn that he lives! May she never comprehend the secret agony of her mother's life! Save her, O God! save her from his fatal, his irresistible influence! May she remain pure and virtuous as she has yet lived! May she remain true to thee, and true to thy servant, who now bows before thee! Look down upon me at this moment with gracious mercy; turn to me my daughter's heart; and, if it be my dark doom to be in this world a widow, though a wife, add not to this

bitterness that I shall prove a mother without a child!"

At this moment the surgeon returned. It was absolutely necessary that Lady Annabel should compose herself. She exerted all that strength of character for which she was remarkable. From this moment she resolved, if her life were the forfeit, not to quit for an instant the bedside of Venetia until she was declared out of danger; and feeling conscious that, if she once indulged her own feelings, she might herself soon be in a situation scarcely less hazardous than her daughter's, she controlled herself with a mighty effort. Calm as a statue, she received the medical attendant, who took the hand of the unconscious Venetia with apprehension too visibly impressed upon his grave countenance. As he took her hand, Venetia opened her eyes, stared at her mother and her attendant, and then immediately closed them.

"She has slept?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"No," said the surgeon, "no: this is not

sleep; it is a feverish trance, that brings her no refreshment." He took out his watch, and marked her pulse with great attention; then he placed his hand on her brow, and shook his head. "These beautiful curls must come off," he said. Lady Annabel glided to the table, and instantly brought the scissors, as if the delay of an instant might be fatal. The surgeon cut off those long golden locks. Venetia raised her hand to her head, and said, in a low voice, "They are for my father." Lady Annabel leant upon the surgeon's arm, and shook.

Now he led the mother to the window, and spoke in a very hushed tone.

"Is it possible that there is anything on your daughter's mind, Lady Annabel?" he inquired.

The agitated mother looked at the inquirer, and then at her daughter; and then for a moment she raised her hand to her eyes; then she replied, in a low but firm voice, "Yes."

"Your ladyship must judge whether you wish

me to be acquainted with it," said Mr. Hawkins, very calmly.

"My daughter has suddenly become acquainted, Sir, with some family incidents of a very painful nature, and the knowledge of which I have hitherto spared her. They are events long past, and their consequences are now beyond all control."

"She knows, then, the worst?"

"Without her mind, I cannot answer that question," said Lady Annabel.

"It is my duty to tell you that Miss Herbert is in imminent danger; she has every appearance of a fever of the most malignant character. I cannot answer for her life."

"O God!" exclaimed Lady Annabel.

"Yet you must compose yourself, my dear lady. Her chance of recovery greatly depends upon the vigilance of her attendants. I shall bleed her again, and place leeches on her temples. There is inflammation on the brain. There

are other remedies also not less powerful. We must not despair; we have no cause to despair until we find these fail. I shall not leave her again; and, for your satisfaction, not for my own, I shall call in additional advice,—the aid of a physician."

A messenger accordingly was instantly despatched for the physician, who resided at a town more distant than Southport; the very town, by-the-by, where Morgana, the gipsey, was arrested. They contrived, with the aid of Pauncefort, to undress Venetia, and place her in her bed, for hitherto they had refrained from this exertion At this moment the withered leaves of a white rose fell from Venetia's dress. A sofa-bed was then made for Lady Annabel, of which, however, she did not avail herself. The whole night she sat by her daughter's side, watching every movement of Venetia, refreshing her hot brow and her parched lips, or arranging, at every opportunity, her disordered pillows. About an hour past midnight the surgeon

retired to rest, for a few hours, in the apartment prepared for him, and Pauncefort, by the desire of her mistress, also withdrew: Lady Annabel was alone with her child, and with those agitated thoughts which the strange occurrences of the day were well calculated to excite.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY in the morning the physician arrived at Cherbury. It remained for him only to approve of the remedies which had been pursued. No material change, however, had occurred in the state of Venetia: she had not slept, and still she seemed unconscious of what was occurring. The gracious interposition of Nature seemed the only hope. When the medical men had withdrawn to consult in the terrace-room, Lady Annabel beckoned to Pauncefort, and led her to the window of Venetia's apartment, which she would not quit.

"Pauncefort," said Lady Annabel, "Venetia has been in her father's room."

"Oh! impossible, my lady," burst forth

Mistress Pauncefort; but Lady Annabel placed her finger on her lip, and checked her. "There is no doubt of it, there can be no doubt of it, Pauncefort; she entered it yesterday; she must have passed the morning there, when you believed she was in the park."

"But, my lady," said Pauncefort, "how could it be? For I scarcely left your la'ship's room a second, and Miss Venetia, I am sure, never was near it. And the key, my lady, the key is in the casket. I saw it half an hour ago with my own eyes."

"There is no use arguing about it, Pauncefort," said Lady Annabel, with decision. "It is as I say. I fear great misfortunes are about to commence at Cherbury."

"Oh! my lady, don't think of such things," said Pauncefort, herself not a little alarmed. "What can happen?"

"I fear more than I know," said Lady Annabel; "but I do fear much. At present I can only think of her."

"Well! my lady," said poor Mistress Pauncefort, looking very bewildered, "only to think of such a thing! and after all the pains I have taken! I am sure I have not opened my lips on the subject these fifteen years; and the many questions I have been asked too! I am sure there is not a servant in the house—"

"Hush! hush!" said Lady Annabel, "I do not blame you, and therefore you need not defend yourself. Go, Pauncefort, I must be alone." Pauncefort withdrew, and Lady Annabel resumed her seat by her daughter's side.

On the fourth day of her attack the medical attendants observed a favourable change in their patient, and were not, of course, slow in communicating this joyful intelligence to her mother. The crisis had occurred, and was past: Venetia had at length sunk into slumber. How different was her countenance from the still, yet settled features, they had before watched with such anxiety! She breathed lightly, the tension of the eyelids had disappeared, her mouth was slightly

open. The physician and his colleague declared that immediate danger was past, and they counselled Lady Annabel to take repose. On condition that one of them should remain by the side of her daughter, the devoted yet miserable mother quitted, for the first time, her child's apartment. Pauncefort followed her to her room.

"Oh! my lady," said Pauncefort, "I am so glad your la'ship is going to lie down a bit."

"I am not going to lie down, Pauncefort. Give me the key."

And Lady Annabel proceeded alone to the forbidden chamber,—that chamber which, after what has occurred, we may now enter with her, and where, with so much labour, she had created a room exactly imitative of their bridal apartment at her husband's castle. With a slow but resolved step she entered the apartment, and proceeding immediately to the table, took up the book; it opened at the stanzas to Venetia. The pages had recently been bedewed with tears. Lady Annabel then looked at the bridal bed,

and marked the missing rose in the garland: it was as she expected. She seated herself then in the chair opposite the portrait, on which she gazed with a glance rather stern than fond.

"Marmion," she exclaimed, "for fifteen years, a solitary votary, I have mourned over, in this temple of baffled affections, the inevitable past. The daughter of our love has found her way, perhaps by an irresistible destiny, to a spot sacred to my long-concealed sorrows. At length she knows her father. May she never know more! May she never learn that the being, whose pictured form has commanded her adoration, is unworthy of those glorious gifts that a gracious Creator has bestowed upon him! Marmion, you seem to smile upon me; you seem to exult in your triumph over the heart of your child. But there is a power in a mother's love that yet shall baffle you. Hitherto I have come here to deplore the past; hitherto I have come here to dwell upon the form that, in spite of all that has happened,

I still was, perhaps, weak enough to love. Those feelings are past for ever. Yes! you would rob me of my child, you would tear from my heart the only consolation you have left me. But Venetia shall still be mine; and I, I am no longer yours. Our love, our still lingering love, has vanished. You have been my enemy; now I am yours. I gaze upon your portrait for the last time; and thus I prevent the magical fascination of that face again appealing to the sympathies of my child. Thus, and thus!"—She seized the ancient dagger that we have mentioned as lying on the volume, and, springing on the chair, she plunged it into the canvass; then, tearing with unflinching resolution the severed parts, she scattered the fragments over the chamber, shook into a thousand leaves the melancholy garland, tore up the volume of his enamoured Muse, and then quitting the chamber, and locking and double locking the door, she descended the staircase, and, proceeding to the great well of Cherbury, hurled into it the fatal key.

"Oh! my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort, as she met Lady Annabel returning in the vestibule, "Doctor Masham is here."

"Is he?" said Lady Annabel, as calm as usual. "I will see him before I lie down. Do not go into Venetia's room. She sleeps, and Mr. Hawkins has promised me to let me know when she wakes."

CHAPTER VIII.

As Lady Annabel entered the terrace-room, Doctor Masham came forward and grasped her hand.

"You have heard of our sorrow!" said her ladyship in a faint voice.

"But this instant," replied the Doctor, in a tone of great anxiety. "Immediate danger—"

"Is past. She sleeps," replied Lady Annabel.

"A most sudden and unaccountable attack," said the Doctor.

It is difficult to describe the contending emotions of the mother as her companion made this observation. At length she replied, "Sudden, certainly sudden; but not unaccountable. O!

my friend," she added, after a moment's pause, "they will not be content until they have torn my daughter from me."

"They tear your daughter from you!" exclaimed Doctor Masham. "Who?"

"He, he," muttered Lady Annabel; her speech was incoherent, her manner very disturbed.

"My dear lady," said the Doctor, gazing on her with extreme anxiety, "you are yourself unwell."

Lady Annabel heaved a deep sigh; the Doctor bore her to a seat. "Shall I send for any one, anything?"

"No one, no one," quickly answered Lady Annabel. "With you, at least, there is no concealment necessary."

She leant back in her chair, the Doctor holding her hand, and standing by her side.

Still Lady Annabel continued sighing deeply: at length she looked up and said, "Does she love me? Do you think, after all, she loves me?"

"Venetia?" inquired the Doctor, in a low

and doubtful voice, for he was greatly perplexed.

"She has seen him; she loves him; she has forgotten her mother."

"My dear lady, you require rest," said Doctor Masham. "You are overcome with strange fancies. Who has your daughter seen?"

"Marmion."

"Impossible: you forget he is —"

"Here also."

"He has spoken to her: she loves him: she will recover: she will fly to him—sooner let us both die!"

"Shall I send for Pauncefort?"

"No, let me be alone with you, with you. You know all, Pauncefort knows all; and she, she knows everything. Fate has baffled me; we cannot struggle with fate. She is his child; she is like him; she is not like her mother. Oh! she hates me; I know she hates me."

"Hush! hush! hush!" said the Doctor, himself very agitated. "Venetia loves you, only you. Why should she love any one else?"

"Who can help it? I loved him. I saw him: I loved him. His voice was music. He has spoken to her, and she yielded—she yielded in a moment. I stood by her bedside. She would not speak to me; she would not know me; she shrank from me. Her heart is with her father—only with him."

"Where did she see him? How?"

"His room—his picture. She knows all. I was away with you, and she entered his chamber."

"Ah!"

"O! Doctor, you have influence with her. Speak to her. Make her love me! Tell her she has no father; tell her he is dead."

"We will do that which is well and wise," replied Doctor Masham: "at present let us be calm; if you give way, her life may be the forfeit. Now is the moment for a mother's love."

"You are right. I should not have left her for an instant. I would not have her wake, and find her mother not watching over her. But I

was tempted. She slept; I left her for a moment; I went to destroy the spell. She cannot see him again. No one shall see him again. It was my weakness, the weakness of long years; and now I am its victim."

"Nay, nay, my sweet lady, all will be quite well. Be but calm; Venetia will recover."

"But will she love me? Oh! no, no, no. She will think only of him. She will not love her mother. She will yearn for her father now. She has seen him, and she will not rest until she is in his arms. She will desert me, I know it."

"And I know the contrary," said the Doctor, attempting to reassure her; "I will answer for Venetia's devotion to you. Indeed she has no thought but your happiness, and can love only you. When there is a fitting time, I will speak to her; but now—now is the time for repose. And you must rest, you must indeed."

"Rest! I cannot. I slumbered in the chair last night by her bedside, and a voice roused me. It was her own. She was speaking to her

father. She told him how she loved him; how long, how much she thought of him; that she would join him when she was well, for she knew he was not dead; and, if he were dead, she would die also. She never mentioned me."

"Nay! the light meaning of a delirious brain."

"Truth—truth—bitter, inevitable truth. O! Doctor, I could bear all but this; but my child —my beautiful fond child, that made up for all my sorrows. My joy—my hope—my life! I knew it would be so; I knew he would have her heart. He said she never could be alienated from him; he said she never could be taught to hate him. I did not teach her to hate him. I said nothing. I deemed, fond foolish mother, that the devotion of my life might bind her to me. But what is a mother's love? I cannot contend with him. He gained the mother; he will gain the daughter too."

"God will guard over you," said Masham,

with streaming eyes; "God will not desert a pious and virtuous woman."

"I must go," said Lady Annabel, attempting to rise, but the Doctor gently controlled her; "perhaps she is awake, and I am not at her side. She will not ask for me, she will ask for him; but I will be there; she will desert me, but she shall not say I ever deserted her."

"She will never desert you," said the Doctor; "my life on her pure heart. She has been a child of unbroken love and duty; still she will remain so. Her mind is for a moment overpowered by a marvellous discovery. She will recover, and be to you as she was before."

"We'll tell her he is dead," said Lady Annabel, eagerly. "You must tell her. She will believe you. I cannot speak to her of him; no, not to secure her heart; never—never—never can I speak to Venetia of her father."

"I will speak," replied the Doctor, "at the ust time. Now let us think of her recovery.

She is no longer in danger. We should be grateful, we should be glad."

"Let us pray to God! Let us humble ourselves," said Lady Annabel. "Let us beseech him not to desert this house. We have been faithful to him—we have struggled to be faithful to him. Let us supplicate him to favour and support us!"

"He will favour and support you," said the Doctor, in a solemn tone. "He has upheld you in many trials; he will uphold you still."

"Ah! why did I love him! Why did I continue to love him! How weak, how foolish, how mad I have been! I have alone been the cause of all this misery. Yes, I have destroyed my child."

"She lives—she will live. Nay, nay, you must reassure yourself. Come, let me send for your servant, and for a moment repose. Nay! take my arm. All depends upon you. We have great cares now; let us not conjure up fantastic fears."

"I must go to my daughter's room. Perhaps, by her side, I might rest. Nowhere else. You will attend me to the door, my friend. Yes! it is something in this life to have a friend."

Lady Annabel took the arm of the good Masham. They stopped at her daughter's door.

"Rest here a moment," she said, as she entered the room without a sound. In a moment she returned. "She still sleeps," said the mother; "I shall remain with her, and you——?"

"I will not leave you," said the Doctor, "but think not of me—Nay! I will not leave you. I will remain under this roof. I have shared its serenity and joy; let me not avoid it in this time of trouble and tribulation."

CHAPTER IX.

VENETIA still slept: her mother alone in the chamber watched by her side. Some hours had elapsed since her interview with Dr. Masham; the medical attendant had departed for a few hours.

Suddenly Venetia moved, opened her eyes, and said in a faint voice, "Mamma!"

The blood rushed to Lady Annabel's heart. That single word afforded her the most exquisite happiness.

"I am here, dearest," she replied.

"Mamma, what is all this?" inquired Venetia.

"You have not been well, my own, but now you are much better."

"I thought I had been dreaming," replied Venetia, "and that all was not right; somebody I thought struck me on my head. But all is right now, because you are here, my dear mamma."

But Lady Annabel could not speak for weeping.

"Are you sure, mamma, that nothing has been done to my head?" continued Venetia. "Why, what is this?" and she touched a light bandage on her brow.

"My darling, you have been ill, and you have lost blood; but now you are getting quite well. I have been very unhappy about you; but now I am quite happy, my sweet, sweet child."

"How long have I been ill?"

"You have been very ill indeed, for four or five days; you have had a fever, Venetia; but now the fever is gone, and you are only a little weak, and you will soon be well."

"A fever! and how did I get the fever?"

"Perhaps you caught cold, my child; but we must not talk too much."

"A fever! I never had a fever before. A fever is like a dream."

"Hush! sweet love. Indeed you must not speak."

"Give me your hand, mamma; I will not speak if you will let me hold your hand. I thought in the fever that we were parted."

"I have never left your side, my child, day or night," said Lady Annabel, not without agitation.

"All this time!—all these days and nights! No one would do that but you, mamma. You think only of me."

"You repay me by your love, Venetia," said Lady Annabel, feeling that her daughter ought not to speak, yet irresistibly impelled to lead out her thoughts.

"How can I help loving you, my dear mamma?"

"You do love me, you do love me very much; do you not, sweet child?"

"Better than all the world," replied Venetia to her enraptured parent. "And yet in the fever I seemed to love some one else: but fevers are like dreams; they are not true."

Lady Annabel pressed her lips gently to her daughter's, and whispered her that she must speak no more

When Mr. Hawkins returned he gave a very favourable report of Venetia. He said that all danger was now past, and that all that was required for her recovery were time, care, and repose. He repeated to Lady Annabel alone that the attack was solely to be ascribed to some great mental shock which her daughter had received, and which suddenly had affected her circulation; leaving it, after this formal intimation, entirely to the mother to take those steps in reference to the cause, whatever it might be, which she should deem expedient.

In the evening Lady Annabel stole down for

a few moments to Dr. Masham, laden with joyful intelligence; assured of the safety of her child, and, what was still more precious, of her heart, and even voluntarily promising her friend that she should herself sleep this night in her daughter's chamber, on the sofa-bed. The Doctor therefore now bade her adieu, and said that he should ride over from Marringhurst every day, to hear how their patient was proceeding.

From this time the recovery of Venetia, though slow, was gradual. She experienced no relapse, and in a few weeks quitted her bed. She was rather surprised at her altered appearance when it first met her glance in the mirror, but scarcely made any observation on the loss of her locks. During this interval the mind of Venetia had been quite dormant; the rage of the fever, and the violent remedies to which it had been necessary to have recourse, had so exhausted her, that she had not energy enough to think. All that she felt was a strange indefinite conviction that some occurrence had taken

place with which her memory could not grapple. But, as her strength returned, and as she gradually resumed her usual health, by proportionate though almost invisible degrees her memory returned to her, and her intelligence. She clearly recollected and comprehended what had taken place. She recalled the past, compared incidents, weighed circumstances, sifted and balanced the impressions that now crowded upon her consciousness. It is difficult to describe each link in the metaphysical chain which at length connected the mind of Venetia Herbert with her actual experience and precise situation. It was however at length perfect, and gradually formed as she sat in an invalid chair, apparently listless, not yet venturing on any occupation, or occasionally amused for a moment by her mother reading to her. But when her mind had thus resumed its natural tone, and in time its accustomed vigour, the past demanded all her solicitude. At length the mystery of her birth was revealed to her. She was the daughter of Mar-

mion Herbert—and who was Marmion Herbert? The portrait rose before her. How distinct was the form—how definite the countenance! No common personage was Marmion Herbert, even had he not won his wife, and celebrated his daughter in such witching strains. Genius was stamped on his lofty brow, and spoke in his brilliant eye; nobility was in all his form. This chivalric poet was her father. She had read, she had dreamed of such beings, she had never seen them. If she quitted the solitude in which she lived, would she see men like her father? No other could ever satisfy her imagination; all beneath that standard would rank but as imperfect creations in her fancy. And this father, he was dead. No doubt. Ah! was there indeed no doubt? Eager as was her curiosity on this all-absorbing subject, Venetia could never summon courage to speak upon it to her mother. Her first disobedience, or rather her first deception of her mother, in reference to this very subject, had brought, and brought so

swiftly on its retributive wings, such disastrous consequences, that any allusion to Lady Annabel was restrained by a species of superstitious fear, against which Venetia could not contend. Then her father was either dead or living. That was certain. If dead, it was clear that his memory, however cherished by his relict, was associated with feelings too keen to admit of any other but solitary indulgence. If living, there was a mystery connected with her parents, a mystery evidently of a painful character, and one which it was a prime object with her mother to conceal and to suppress. Could Venetia, then, in defiance of that mother, that fond devoted mother, that mother who had watched through long days and long nights over her sick bed, and who now, without a murmur, was a prisoner to this very room, only to comfort and console her child—could Venetia take any step which might occasion this matchless parent even a transient pang? No; it was impossible. To her mother she could never speak. And yet, to

remain enveloped in the present mystery, she was sensible, was equally insufferable. All she asked, all she wanted to know,—was he alive? If he were alive, then, although she could not see him, though she might never see him, she could exist upon his idea ; she could conjure up romances of future existence with him ; she could live upon the fond hope of some day calling him father, and receiving from his hands the fervid blessing he had already breathed to her in song.

In the mean time, her remaining parent commanded all her affections. Even if he were no more, blessed was her lot with such a mother ! Lady Annabel seemed only to exist to attend upon her daughter. No lover ever watched with such devotion the wants, or even the caprices, of his mistress. A thousand times every day Venetia found herself expressing her fondness and her gratitude. It seemed that the late dreadful contingency of losing her daughter had developed in Lady Annabel's heart even additional

powers of maternal devotion; and Venetia, the fond and grateful Venetia, ignorant of the strange past, which she believed she so perfectly comprehended, returned thanks to Heaven that her mother was at least spared the mortification of knowing that her daughter, in her absence, had surreptitiously invaded the sanctuary of her secret sorrow.

CHAPTER X.

When Venetia had so far recovered that, leaning on her mother's arm, she could resume her walks upon the terrace, Doctor Masham persuaded his friends, as a slight and not unpleasant change of scene, to pay him a visit at Marringhurst. Since the chamber scene, indeed, Lady Annabel's tie to Cherbury was much weakened. There were certain feelings of pain, and fear, and mortification, now associated with that place, which she could not bear to dwell upon, and which greatly balanced those sentiments of refuge and repose, of peace and love, with which the old hall, in her mind, was heretofore connected. Venetia ever adopted the slightest intimations of

a wish on the part of her mother, and so she very readily agreed to fall into the arrangement.

It was rather a long and rough journey to Marringhurst, for they were obliged to use the old chariot; but Venetia forgot her fatigues in the cordial welcome of their host, whose sparkling countenance well expressed the extreme gratification their arrival occasioned him. All that the tenderest solicitude could devise for the agreeable accommodation of the invalid had been zealously concerted; and the constant influence of Doctor Masham's cheerful mind was as beneficial to Lady Annabel as to her daughter. The season was very gay, the place was very pleasant; and although they were only a few miles from home, in a house with which they were so familiar, and their companion one whom they had known intimately all their lives, and of late almost daily seen, yet such is the magic of a change in our habits, however slight, and of the usual theatre of their custom, that this visit to Marringhurst assumed quite the air

of an adventure, and seemed at first almost invested with the charm and novelty of travel.

The surrounding country, which, though verdant, was very flat, was well adapted to the limited exertions and still feeble footsteps of an invalid, and Venetia began to study botany with the Doctor, who indeed was not very profound in his attainments in this respect, but knew quite enough to amuse his scholar. By degrees also, as her strength daily increased, they extended their walks; and at length she even mounted her pony, and was fast recovering her elasticity both of body and mind. There were also many pleasant books with which she was unacquainted; a cabinet of classic coins, prints, and pictures. She became, too, interested in the Doctor's rural pursuits; would watch him with his angle, and already meditated a revolution in his garden. So time, on the whole, flew cheerfully on, certainly without any weariness, and the day seldom passed that they did not all

congratulate themselves on the pleasant and profitable change.

In the mean time Venetia, when alone, still recurred to that idea that was now so firmly rooted in her mind that it was quite out of the power of any social discipline to divert her attention from it. She was often the sole companion of the Doctor, and she had long resolved to seize a favourable opportunity to appeal to him on the subject of her father. It so happened that she was walking alone with him one morning in the neighbourhood of Marringhurst, having gone to visit the remains of a Roman encampment in the immediate vicinity. When they had arrived at the spot, and the Doctor had delivered his usual lecture on the locality, they sat down together on a mound, that Venetia might rest herself.

"Were you ever in Italy, Doctor Masham?" said Venetia.

"I never was out of my native country," said

the Doctor. "I once, indeed, was about making the grand tour with a pupil of mine at Oxford, but circumstances interfered which changed his plans, and so I remain a regular John Bull."

"Was my father at Oxford?" said Venetia, very quietly.

"He was," replied the Doctor, looking very confused.

"I should like to see Oxford very much," said Venetia.

"It is a most interesting seat of learning," said the Doctor, quite delighted to change the subject. "Whether we consider its antiquity, its learning, the influence it has exercised upon the history of the country, its magnificent endowments, its splendid buildings, its great colleges, libraries, and museums, or that it is one of the principal head-quarters of all the hope of England—our youth, it is not too much to affirm that there is scarcely a spot on the face of the globe of equal interest and importance."

"It is not for its colleges, or libraries, or mu-

scums, or all its splendid buildings," observed Venetia, "that I should wish to see it. I wish to see it because my father was once there. I should like to see a place where I was quite cer tain my father had been."

"Still harping of her father," thought the Doctor to himself, and growing very uneasy; yet, from his very anxiety to turn the subject, quite incapable of saying an appropriate word.

"Do you remember my father at Oxford, Doctor Masham?" said Venetia.

"Yes! no, yes!" said the Doctor, rather colouring; "that is, he must have been there in my time, I rather think."

"But you do not recollect him?" said Vene tia, pressing the question.

"Why," rejoined the Doctor, a little more collected, "when you remember that there are between two and three thousand young men at the university, you must not consider it very surprising that I might not recollect your father."

"No," said Venetia, "perhaps not: and yet I cannot help thinking that he must always have been a person who, if once seen, would not easily have been forgotten."

"Here is an Erica vagans," said the Doctor, picking a flower; "it is rather uncommon about here;" and handing it at the same time to Venetia.

"My father must have been very young when he died?" said Venetia, scarcely looking at the flower.

"Yes, your father was very young," he replied.

"Where did he die?"

"I cannot answer that question."

"Where was he buried?"

"You know, my dear young lady, that the subject is too tender for any one to converse with your poor mother upon it. It is not in my power to give you the information you desire. Be satisfied, my dear Miss Herbert, that a gracious Providence has spared to you one parent, and one so inestimable."

"I trust I know how to appreciate so great a blessing," replied Venetia; "but I should be sorry if the natural interest which all children must take in those who have given them birth should be looked upon as idle and unjustifiable curiosity."

"My dear young lady, you misapprehend me."

"No, Doctor Masham, indeed I do not," replied Venetia, with firmness. "I can easily conceive that the mention of my father may for various reasons be insupportable to my mother; it is enough for me that I am convinced such is the case: my lips are sealed to her for ever upon the subject; but I cannot recognise the necessity of this constraint to others. For a long time I was kept in ignorance whether I had a father or not. I have discovered, no matter how, who he was. I believe, pardon me, my dearest friend, I cannot help believing, that you were acquainted, or, at least, that you know something of him; and I entreat you! yes," repeated Venetia with

great emphasis, laying her hand upon his arm, and looking with earnestness in his face, "I entreat you, by all your kind feelings to my mother and myself,—by all that friendship we so prize,—by the urgent solicitation of a daughter who is influenced in her curiosity by no light or unworthy feeling,—yes! by all the claims of a child to information which ought not to be withheld from her,—tell me, tell me all, tell me something! Speak, Doctor Masham, do speak!"

"My dear young lady," said the Doctor, with a glistening eye, "it is better that we should both be silent."

"No, indeed," replied Venetia, "it is not better, it is not well that we should be silent. Candour is a great virtue. There is a charm, a healthy charm, in frankness. Why this mystery? Why these secrets? Have they worked good? Have they benefitted us? O! my friend, I would not say so to my mother, I would not be tempted by any sufferings to pain

for an instant her pure and affectionate heart; but indeed, Doctor Masham, indeed, indeed, what I tell you is true, all my late illness, my present state, all, all are attributable but to one cause, this mystery about my father!"

"What can I tell you?" said the unhappy Masham.

"Tell me only one fact. I ask no more. Yes! I promise you, solemnly I promise you, I will ask no more. Tell me, does he live?"

"He does!" said the doctor. Venetia sank upon his shoulder.

"My dear young lady, my darling young lady!" said the Doctor;—"she has fainted. What can I do?" The unfortunate Doctor placed Venetia in a reclining posture, and hurried to a brook that was nigh, and brought water in his hand to sprinkle on her. She revived; she made a struggle to restore herself.

"It is nothing," she said, "I am resolved to be well. I am well. I am myself again. He lives; my father lives! I was confident of it;

I will ask no more. I am true to my word. O! Doctor Masham, you have always been my kind friend, but you have never yet conferred on me a favour like the one you have just bestowed."

"But it is well," said the Doctor, "as you know so much, that you should know more."

"Yes! yes!"

"As we walk along," he continued, "we will converse, or at another time; there is no lack of opportunity."

"No, now, now!" eagerly exclaimed Venetia, "I am quite well. It was not pain or illness that overcame me. Now let us walk, now let us talk of these things. He lives?"

"I have little to add," said Dr. Masham, after a moment's thought; "but this, however painful, it is necessary for you to know, that your father is unworthy of your mother, utterly; they are separated; they never can be reunited."

"Never!" said Venetia.

"Never," replied Doctor Masham; "and I

now warn you; if, indeed, as I cannot doubt, you love your mother; if her peace of mind and happiness are, as I hesitate not to believe, the principal objects of your life; upon this subject with her be for ever silent. Seek to penetrate no mysteries, spare all allusions, banish, if possible, the idea of your father from your memory. Enough, you know he lives. We know no more. Your mother labours to forget him; her only consolation for sorrows such as few women ever experienced, is her child, yourself, your love. Now be no niggard with it. Cling to this unrivalled parent, who has dedicated her life to you. Soothe her sufferings, endeavour to make her share your happiness; but, of this be certain, that if you raise up the name and memory of your father between your mother and yourself, her life will be the forfeit!"

"His name shall never pass my lips," said Venetia; "solemnly I swear it. That his image shall be banished from my heart is too much to

ask, and more than it is in my power to grant. But I am my mother's child. I will exist only for her; and, if my love can console her, she shall never be without solace. I thank you, Doctor, for all your kindness. We will never talk again upon the subject; yet, believe me, you have acted wisely, you have done good."

CHAPTER XVII.

Venetia observed her promise to Doctor Masham with strictness. She never alluded to her father, and his name never escaped her mother's lips. Whether Doctor Masham apprised Lady Annabel of the conversation that had taken place between himself and her daughter, it is not in our power to mention. The visit to Marringhurst was not a short one. It was a relief both to Lady Annabel and Venetia, after all that had occurred, to enjoy the constant society of their friend; and this change of life, though apparently so slight, proved highly beneficial to Venetia. She daily recovered her health, and a degree of mental composure, which

she had not for some time enjoyed. On the whole she was greatly satisfied with the discoveries which she had made. She had ascertained the name and the existence of her father: his very form and appearance were now no longer matter for conjecture; and in a degree she had even communicated with him. Time, she still believed, would develope even further wonders. She clung to an irresistible conviction that she should yet see him; that he might even again be united to her mother. She indulged in dreams as to his present pursuits and position: she repeated to herself his verses, and remembered his genius with pride and consolation.

They returned to Cherbury, they resumed the accustomed tenour of their lives, as if nothing had occurred to disturb it. The fondness between the mother and her daughter was unbroken and undiminished. They shared again the same studies and the same amusements. Lady Annabel perhaps indulged the conviction that Venetia had imbibed the belief that her

father was no more, and yet in truth that father was the sole idea on which her child ever brooded. Venetia had her secret now; and often as she looked up at the windows of the uninhabited portion of the building, she remembered with concealed, but not less keen exultation, that she had penetrated their mystery. She could muse for hours over all that chamber had revealed to her, and indulge in a thousand visions, of which her father was the centre. She was his "own Venetia." Thus he had hailed her at her birth, and thus he might yet again acknowledge her. If she could only ascertain where he existed! What if she could, and she were to communicate with him? He must love her. Her heart assured her he must love her. She could not believe, if they were to meet, that his breast could resist the silent appeal which the sight merely of his only child would suffice to make. Oh! why had her parents parted! What could have been his fault? He was so young! But a few, few

years older than herself when her mother must have seen him for the last time. Yes! for the last time beheld that beautiful form, and that countenance that seemed breathing only with genius and love. He might have been imprudent, rash, violent; but she would not credit for an instant that a stain could attach to the honor or the spirit of Marmion Herbert.

The summer wore away. One morning, as Lady Annabel and Venetia were sitting together, Mistress Pauncefort bustled into the room with a countenance radiant with smiles and wonderment. Her ostensible business was to place upon the table a vase of flowers, but it was very evident that her presence was occasioned by affairs of far greater urgency. The vase was safely deposited; Mistress Pauncefort gave the last touch to the arrangement of the flowers; she lingered about Lady Annabel. At length she said, "I suppose you have heard the news, my lady?"

"Indeed, Pauncefort, I have not," replied Lady Annabel, very quietly. "What news?"

"My Lord is coming to the abbey."

"Indeed!"

"Oh yes, my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort; "I am not at all surprised your ladyship should be so astonished. Never to write, too! Well, I must say he might have given us a line. But he is coming, I am certain sure of that, my lady. My lord's gentleman has been down these two days; and all his dogs and guns too, my lady. And the keeper is ordered to be quite ready, my lady, for the first. I wonder if there is going to be a party. I should not be at all surprised."

"Plantagenet returned!" said Lady Annabel. "Well, I shall be very glad to see him again."

"So shall I, my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort; "but I dare say we shall hardly know him again, he must be so grown. Trimmer has

been over to the Abbey, my lady, and saw my lord's valet. Quite the fine gentleman, Trimmer says. I was thinking of walking over myself, this afternoon, to see poor Mrs. Quin, my lady; I dare say we might be of use, and neighbours should be handy, as they say. She is a very respectable woman, poor Mrs. Quin, and I am sure for my part, if your ladyship has no objection, I should be very glad to be of service to her."

"I have of course no objection, Pauncefort, to your being of service to the housekeeper, but has she required your assistance?"

"Why no, my lady, but poor Mrs. Quin would hardly like to ask for anything, my lady; but I am sure we might be of very great use, for my lord's gentleman seems very dissatisfied at his reception, Trimmer says. He has his hot breakfast every morning, my lady, and poor Mrs. Quin says———"

"Well, Pauncefort, that will do," said Lady Annabel, and the functionary disappeared.

"We have almost forgotten Plantagenet, Venetia," added Lady Annabel, addressing herself to her daughter.

"He has forgotten us, I think, mamma," said Venetia.

END OF VOL. I.

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